Cluster Fuck

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Cluster Fuck

by Eattheboring

Summary

Will Graham, K-9 unit cop of small town Wolf Trap, Virginia, chooses to run with Hannibal Lecter, leader of a notorious biker gang.
AKA how the series would have gone had Hannibal been a BAMF biker

Notes

The Wake-Up by How to Destroy Angels

Wait a minute
Is anybody, is anybody, is anybody
Listening?

The Wake-Up

He's the kind of person you would want to push simply to see what would happen.

Will Graham, very good at appearing harmless, sits at the table with his pale, dusky, vibrant features, and the dark shadows under his eyes and translucent skin gave him the impression of a nightmarish insomniac.

The sunlight streaming through the plate-glass windows of the cafe is warm, almost hot, a comfort to the dead world of a chilly spring in the countryside. Will has his eyes closed, enjoying the sunlight against his skin, lost in the solitary of the empty restaurant. The hum of the fluorescent lights is giving him the undertones of a headache, but not one bad enough to justify the aspirin bottle burning a hole in his jeans pocket.

It's nice that his cop shift just ended, but on a Friday night in this tiny town, Will's got nowhere else to be at. The only waitress on duty watches him with kind of a wary good humor- he tends to hang out here after his shift because the coffee doesn't suck. He's already changed out of his police uniform. Not much of a use for the K-9 unit in this area, so his workload has been rather undisturbed lately.

Today, as the sun starts to lengthen shadows on the asphalt in the parking lot and white background noises of the highway and broken refrigerators fills the loneliness of twilight; the peace is broken by a tinny whine, which strengthens into a gas-fueled roar. Will opens his eyes in surprise to watch several black motorcycles sweep into the lot like angels of death descending upon the unworthy. Sharp black boots kick the bike stands out and the patch on the back of each leather jacket is a picture of a red stag with the words "HUNTSMEN" emblazoned beneath it, except for one jacket, festooned with the title "CANNIBAL" above the stag.

The group of bikers tramp into the cafe, bell announcing their presence, and spread out into the booths with a clamor one usually associate with a herd of horses. They look as out of place in this nowhere town as ink staining clear water, and none of them notice the cop who pretends to keep his eyes down.

Only one man, however, sees the flick of dark blue eyes taking in as much as possible, admiring these fatales whose boots snap like gunshots against the linoleum.

"We'll be headed to the bar later, right?" An Asian woman with dark hair calls. She passes too close to Will's table and knocks his beer bottle over. The shattering of glass and liquid splashing the floor is extremely loud. He jumps up to get napkins.

"Im so sorry!" The Asian woman cries, partly to the waitress and to Will.

"It's okay," Will responds as he scrambles out of the booth to help clean up. "Accident-"

Suddenly the pair of boots Will had been watching come forward and stop in front of him, and the man with the 'CANNIBAL' jacket crouches down and is cleaning up the broken

bottle pieces.

He looks up at Will, who puts the pile of napkins in his hands. The man wipes up the beer as best he can before the waitress comes over with a mop.

“Hannibal Lecter,” the man says to Will, standing up and stepping closer to him to give the waitress more space. “A pleasure to meet you.”

Will looks at the rim of his thick glasses, pretending he’s looking at Hannibal, and clears his throat. He doesn’t actually need to wear glasses like this, but uses them to avoid eye contact. It’s been pretty successful so far; he’s only had to look directly at one person this week. A record.

“New in town?” He asks, backing up marginally because this man is way too close. Hannibal smells like motorcycle exhaust and cigarettes- and a leathery cologne Will wants to bury his face in for some reason.

“I am,” Hannibal says, standing still for a moment, and Will can feel the biker’s eyes upon his plaid shirt, the dark veins in his arms, and the shadows under his eyes. He knows he should be making eye contact and being pleasant- why the hell is this guy talking to him anyways?-but he’s frozen in place like a rabbit in front of a car. Like a rabbit stuck watching headlights bearing down from a 16-wheeler semi.

Little rabbit Will manages a smile and notices Hannibal’s gang is spreading out supplies on the table- they’ve got rope, bleach, trash bags-

Will’s mouth moves faster than his rational thought, and to his horror he hears himself saying, “Planning a killing spree?”

Hannibal follows his eyes to the gang. Will expects an awkward explanation, quickly assuring him it’s not what it looks like, but to his surprise Hannibal chuckles and responds, “Perhaps.”

Will is so surprised his looks up and meets brown eyes, so light they’re almost red, like sunlight shining through a glass of wine. There is nothing going on behind them. They have the flat stare of a shark, predatory and hungry.

Will’s cordial, awkward cheer hits a brick wall. His stomach is twisted into something acid and fearful. But he is caught and held by the way Hannibal’s pupils widen in what is unmistakable attraction. Rabbit Will’s breath is caught somewhere between his lungs and his lips, brain telling him to put obscene distance between himself and this man. He struggles to come up with a proper response, struggles to remember what social protocol deems appropriate in this situation.

“Can I buy you another drink?” Hannibal asks, still looking at him.

Will, in a daze, shakes his head and turns around, gathers his coat up. “I’m good.” He says. “Thanks anyways.”

He squeezes past Hannibal and almost slips on the slick residue of the beer. Hannibal shifts to catch him but Will steadies himself and hustles outside before he can embarrass himself further.

He fumbles with his keys by his car and watches while the rest of the biker gang purchases a creative variety of alcohol, and the Asian woman talks to the waitress and hands over what Will assumes is compensation for the broken bottle. Will can see Hannibal talking to a blonde woman, and he ducks down beside his car when the two of them turn to the windows. He wipes his sweaty hands on his jeans and puts his face in his palms, considering something stupid, potentially embarrassing, and a little bit dangerous.

Under here, face-to-face with his reflection in the driver door, he wishes his eyes weren't so bright, shining feverishly in the dusk. Maybe it's a fever that is driving him to do this. Maybe it's just a severe lack of caring. Whatever.

He stands up and gets into his car, takes one last glance at the biker gang in the cafe, and twists his key in the ignition.

The bar is crowded and hot and way too loud, already bumping and rolling with people dancing and spilling their drinks and generally making a riot of themselves. The bartenders look like they've been sampling every drink they pass along, laughing and arguing with the masses around the bar. Will is the only one not covered in tattoos or wearing leather.

He feels small and out of place, pale and skinny and not very intimidating. This bar is known for its violent fights, so Will usually avoids coming in because the police force is preyed upon here. Off-duty cops get dragged off and beaten without time to call for backup. He pretends to belong, though, walking in with a confidence he doesn't feel. He thinks he's pretty good at pretending. Been doing it his whole life.

Once he finds himself pressed to the bar, Will orders a whiskey and swallows a generous mouthful as soon as the glass touches his hand, looking over the crowds and searching for one specific set of auburn eyes.

This isn't the only bar that tumbleweed bikers frequent, so he's surprised when he spots the clan of black leather riders in the corner, standing around and smoking. Hannibal is there, leaning against the wall and scanning the crowds too, and when Hannibal's eyes meet Will's he doesn't look especially surprised. He takes a drag of his cigarette, the red burning end lighting up his face for a moment, and exhales a curl of smoke from his lips when he turns to talk to someone beside him.

Will orders another whiskey for courage, and has barely lifted it to his lips when somebody is pushed into him and the tumbler smashes into his mouth. He spits out broken glass, mouth bleeding, and turns to see a man with a buzz-cut smirking at him.

"I know you." The man shouts over the music. "Fucking cop."

The word 'cop' draws attention. People turn to them, interested now.

“Hey, yeah,” someone else calls. “His buddy got me the other day on route 50.”

“We don’t fucking need a cop here.” Will is pushed from behind into the buzz-cut man, who shoves him back.

Will doesn’t think, just reacts, throwing a clumsy punch that barely glances off the man’s shoulder, but buzz-cut dude punches him right back, a heavy fist to Will’s stomach that knocks the wind out of him. Will pretends to falter, and Buzz-cut gets cheered on by his buddies as Will doubles over. While the attention is on Buzz-cut, Will regains his breath and stands up to shove the man, hard, into a bar stool which tips over with a crash, trapping Buzz-cut underneath.

Will is suddenly aware that the entire bar had gone quiet, watching the spat, and when it is obvious the fight is over hoots and hollers announce Will as the winner.

Somebody pulls the heavy barstool off of Buzz-cut and he comes back at Will, humiliated and angry now, but Will ducks behind a larger man and dives into the crowd, swims along until he finds himself at the bathroom. Besides the broken glass dripping down his chest, his whole shirt is soaked with blood and whiskey, but no one notices the way he’s bleeding onto the floor as he squeezes by.

At least the distraction worked. Everyone has seemed to forgotten law enforcement in their midst.

In the dirty mirror of the noticeably quieter bathroom, he checks his lip, which is split in four different places and gushing blood, along with a slit along the side of his tongue, which is also bleeding heavily. He finds a roll of spare toilet paper in the stall and stuffs a cheek with it, looking like a root canal survivor or a particularly angry chipmunk. There’s not much he can do about the blood on his shirt, but he takes it off anyways and tries to wash the whiskey off in the sink. The paper towel dispenser is, of course, empty, so he just wrings out the shirt and sniffs at it, and then washes it again. The bathroom is chilly and goosebumps rise up along his body.

He eventually puts his damp shirt back on, examining it in the mirror and decides that most of the bloodstains on his shoulders and chest aren’t that noticeable. He takes out the toilet paper and rinses his mouth with nasty tap water, spits blood back into the grimy sink.

Returning to the club, Will is rethinking this adventure, since Hannibal and his gang seem to have disappeared into the dark of the dancefloor and the crowds are getting rougher. There is more pushing and knocking, more beer and sweat and who knows what else slicking the floor, plus his new friend Buzz-cut has just spotted him and is now coming across the room.

Will crouches behind a table and blends into a group of college yuppies, waiting until Buzz-cut has lost him before he ducks through several sets of doors and pushes out the backdoor into the alley behind the club.

The garbage cans back here are overflowing with cigarette butts and- gross, are those used condoms? There’s a couple of motorbikes back here too, standing in a row.

Will leans against the brick wall and takes off his glasses, rubs his eyes, his headache throbbing painfully now. Above him, a tiny light buzzes, surrounded by moths. His breath is misty in the evening dark.

He didn't know what he was looking for when he came to the club, but this wasn't what he had in mind. He should probably just go home to his empty house and drink till morning, as per usual weekend habit, since it's obvious that whatever spark he felt with a stranger isn't meant to be followed through like in movies.

It's even colder out here than in the bathroom. His tongue is still bleeding heavily and rather than spit blood like a villain in a Quentin Tarantino movie, he swallows, gags, and ends up spitting it out anyways.

He has unscrewed the bottle from his pocket and is tipping a few aspirin back, dry, when he is shoved from behind. He goes down hard on his knees and elbows against asphalt and there is a hand twisted tightly into his hair that slams his head down into the ground once, twice. The aspirin bottle is knocked from his hands and bounces once, spilling an arc of white pills across the ground like aerial spray. Will can't see, there's blood dripping from his bruised nose, and he goes down on his side when his attacker kicks him in the ribs.

He twists around as far as his caught hair can allow, catching a glimpse of the assailant- it's Buzz-cut. Will tries to curl around himself but doesn't get far as Buzz-cut jerks him back, exposing Will's throat. He can see a glimmer of something jagged in Buzz-cuts other hand and he fights harder, tries to call for help but barely gets a sound out before he's hauled up again by his hair.

"Dontcha know," Buzz-cut grits out, "this place is ripe for pig killing?" and now Will can see the man has a broken bottle in his hand, gripping it by the neck.

Will throws an elbow back but gets the bottle gashed in his forearm for his trouble. Buzz-cut twists him up and moves to pull back and stab the bottle into his throat.

Instead of puncturing his neck, severing arteries and splitting his windpipe, the bottle is jerked downward and pierces Will's shoulder in a deep, ripping stab.

The hand twisted in his hair disappears suddenly.

Will falls to his knees and tips to his side before he sits up, scrambling to put his back against the dumpster just outside of the ring of light. His shoulder is white hot agony and he's trying to hold the wound shut, gushes blood into his fist.
Hannibal is there, wrestling with Buzz-cut on the ground, but Buzz-cut has the weight advantage and pins Hannibal beneath him after a few moments of struggle. For one confused moment Will thinks Hannibal has his hand against Buzz-cut's crotch, but then Buzz-cut screams, high and strange, and staggers upwards on his knees to fall backwards onto his back.

A spray of blood follows and Buzz-cut makes a horrible gurgling noise, doubled over his middle.

Hannibal's face and chest are wet with blood; it drips down his forearms and onto the ground. He sits up and Will can see a fucking Liston knife in his hand, slick with blood all the way to his wrist. Hannibal's teeth are red when he bares them in something that might be a snarl or a smile.

Will ducks his head and heaves bile when he realizes that Hannibal just gutted Buzz-cut from pubic bone to sternum.

Hannibal crawls over and rolls Buzz-cut's limp head to the light, examines the whites of the other man's open eyes. He leaves him on the ground while pulling up his own shirt to wipe the blood from his face, then beckons Will closer.

"Come here," he says, "let me see."

Will's legs feel like water and he's trembling so hard he's not sure if he can stand up, so Hannibal crouches down in front of Will and soothes his bruised and cut face with his thumbs. He's tucked his Liston knife back into his leather jacket after he wiped it off on his pants. Will's vision is blurry, headache now ten-fold the pain it was earlier, a screaming blaze of agony blossoming from where he was bashed against the ground.

His fear and adrenaline has kept him from feeling his wounds, but as the excitement fades away he can feel the screaming pain of the horrible cut in his shoulder. He's bleeding everywhere, thick blood soaking his shirt, dripping from his hands and falling to the ground in wide splats. Hysterically, his eyes roll from the blood on his shoes to Buzz-cut's slit body, and it takes a minute for him to realize Hannibal is talking to him again. He can't understand what he's saying, but when Hannibal waves a finger across his field of vision Will tracks it with his eyes and Hannibal smiles.

"No concussion," He is saying, pleased. "But we have to get you to a hospital right now. If exsanguination doesn't get you, the shock will."

Will simply smiles at him, not comprehending. His shoulder is starting to not hurt anymore, which is worrying. Hannibal still has his bloodsoaked shirt, and he finds a clean corner of it to wipe some of the dirt and cigarette ashes from Will's bruised nose and mouth. Will closes his eyes when Hannibal wipes the fear-sweat from his forehead and lets the murderer wash the blood from his face.

"Get up," Hannibal says, offering Will a blood-washed, sticky hand. Will grips it tight, grounding himself, and hefts himself upwards to lean heavily against the wall. Some of Buzz-cut's blood is transferred to his own palm and he shudders, rubs his hand back and forth across the denim of his jeans until his hand is raw.

"Wait here one moment." Hannibal says, and steps back into the club, leaving Will with Buzz-cut's fucking corpse for company. Will tilts his head forwards so if he passes out he'll fall so the shoulder wound is held shut against his fist. The pain is incredible, has Will crying out of tightly closed eyes so he doesn't have to look at Buzz-cut's body anymore. The stench of so much blood would have made him throw up again if he had anything left to heave.
He doesn't think of calling 911. Doesn't think of calling the police force on Hannibal for the murder.

Hannibal comes back with one of his biker fatals, a delicate, thin woman whose blond hair is flipped over onto one side and curls into one large ringlet. She takes a step back at all the blood in the alley, but at a low word form Hannibal she lightly steps around the scene, examining it, before nodding to Hannibal. Hannibal goes over to one of the bikes, presumably his own, and pulls out the grocery bag of potential murder supplies Will recognizes from earlier at the cafe.

It's almost too ironic. Will starts to laugh, high-pitched and frenzied, and is not sure when the whole situation took a humorous turn and doesn't really care why. Hannibal and the blonde exchange a look.

Hannibal pulls out the box of latex gloves, takes out a pair and tosses the rest to the blonde, then walks around to Buzz-cut's corpse. He pulls on the gloves and wrestles Buzz-cut's leather jacket off of his limp body. He doesn't seem too bothered by the fact that Buzz-cut's fucking organs are slipping over to one side or the way the body squishes when Hannibal flips Buzz-cut over onto his stomach to get the coat off.

He steps over to where Will is watching with wide, scared eyes, and offers him his arm like they were going to go get seated at the goddamn opera. Will hesitates, then puts his hand through Hannibal's elbow, and is lead to Hannibal's motorbike, the largest and slimmest one of the lineup. It's a beautiful matte black California 14000, and it looks, quite literally, like hell on wheels. The bike looks like Hannibal in the same way dogs look like their owners, as if it was custom built for him, and Will has a suspicion it was.
Hannibal stuffs Buzz-cut's coat in a saddlebag, borrows a helmet from another bike, and straps it to Will. It's the first time Will's been on a motorbike in a long time and he straddles it awkwardly, but he's lightheaded and dizzy and the world starts to darken at the corners as Hannibal sits behind him and wraps his arms around him to reach the handlebars.

Hannibal revs the engine, kicks out the stop and they speed out of the parking lot, leaving the blonde behind with a black trash bag in one hand and a bottle of bleach in the other. Alone on the dark roads, it's like they're riding a great raging beast of light and exhaust, sweeping corners and blazing down the highway as free and deadly as a great bird of prey. Will tries to stay awake for his very first time riding the roads on a bike with a hot biker that literally just saved his life, but as safe as he can be in Hannibal's arms going 80 in a 55 MPH zone, the roar of the bike fades away and Will slips under.

Drop the Other

Chapter Notes

> This chapter contains a pretty violent animal attack, so if you have any triggers relating to that sort of thing please watch out.
>
> Drop The Other by Emika
>
> From the very first time
> I could see in your eyes
> They showed me everything
> I need was waiting

Will remembers getting carried by Hannibal, bridal-style, down a bright hallway, leaving bloody puddles on the floor.

He remembers a nurse checking his pupils and asking him what day it is.

When his head clears, he is in a hospital bed with 6 stitches along the wound in his shoulder, two shallow cuts on his right elbow, tape over his injured nose and a bruised rib.

A nurse asks him about the cut on his tongue and Will tells her the story of the glass-to-mouth and the fight after, which explains for the nose and the arm cuts and head trauma, but he remains vague about the stab wound in his shoulder. He doesn't mention the fight in the alley, or the brawl between Buzz-cut and Hannibal- he's suppressing that memory, or at least trying very hard.

He sucks on ice cubes for moisture and almost cries when he has control of the morphine drip- he instantly numbs his pain in a flood of ice through his veins. It's much faster than whiskey and he can see now why people get addicted to it.

When he wakes up again around lunch time there is a police officer he doesn't recognise standing over his bed. He looks like he doesn't want to be here as much as Will, but the man sits and pulls out a notepad anyways.

"Off duty fucking sucks, am I right?" He says, smiling. Will doesn't smile back. "I heard you work down at the police station- I'm not from around here, so I wouldn't know ya. Mind answering a few questions about what happened that night you got those wounds?"

"Bar fight," Will responds.

He knows that everyone in the club that night saw him take down Buzz-cut, but nobody except Hannibal and the blonde knows what happened after.

“A bar fight doesn’t usually result in a stabbing and near bleeding out. Why where you in there? Everyone knows the crazies at that place love cop hunting.”

“I’m not a cop.” Will interrupts. The officer raises his eyebrows. “I’m part of the K-9 training force, but I’m not active duty. I don’t even get a badge. I went for a drink and got into a fight.”

The police officer doesn’t look like he gets paid enough to deal with this shit right now. “A totally unprovoked fight?” He asks. He leans in. “Listen, you don't want to get mixed up in the gang fights around here. Leave that to the real cops. Just tell me the details and we’ll track down whatever mob did this to you.”

“It wasn’t a mob.” Will says stubbornly. “I ate glass when somebody shoved me, we fought, and the glass cut me up like this.”

“That man that eyewitnesses claim you fought with hasn't been seen since, and although we don’t usually get in with gang business, he left a girlfriend who is demanding we do a missing person investigation.” The police officer lowered his voice. “I just think the poor bitch doesn’t want to admit her bastard ran out on her.”

“I was defending myself,” Will lies. “I took a beating for it, and just I didn’t come out on top.”

“Aint that the truth,” the man says, eyeing Will’s bruised face. “Well, that’s all I got for ya. We’ll be closing down that bar anyways; the nurses here treat a knife victim every other week from that place...Though none as bad as yours.” He stands up and adds from the doorway, “Word of advice- don’t go telling everyone you’re a damn cop. This coulda been a whole lot fucking nastier.”

Will can’t smile because it would pull at his stitches and he’s under orders to not make too many facial expressions, but he kind of squints his eyes at the police officer and nods. Yep, sensible Will with his out-of-action job and murder resulting bar fights. Nothing to see here.

Later, to his surprise, Hannibal is admitted to his hospital room as a guest and he brings Buzz-cut’s leather jacket with him and a change of clothes.

“My own.” he explains, seeing Will’s puzzled expression when he sets some band shirts on the side table. “I thought you would not want to change back into your own bloodstained clothes upon your discharge, so I took it upon myself to bring you some fresh shirts. You should be able to fit my smaller garments.”

He sits at a comfortable distance from Will and drapes Buzz-cut’s coat over the back of his chair, polite and quiet and looking totally out of place with his leather jacket, boots, leather pants and artistically ripped t-shirt. Will tries very hard not to feel inadequate and small in his patient scrubs with his unwashed hair.

Hannibal is tall and muscular, tan, with light blonde hair that might be silver or hazel or a mixture of both. He has prominent cheek-bones and dark lips, and his eyebrows are so light they're almost non-existent.

His eyes are still flat and predatory, and for a man who seems big on courtesy he doesn't seem to mind that Will can't look directly at his face.

"I am afraid I never caught your name," he says. He has an accent that Will can't quite place, maybe something close to Slavic.

"Will Graham." Will says, and when they formally shake hands Hannibal's hand is calloused and his nails are clean.

A nurse brings in a tray of hospital food, some kind of shake for Will to sip through a straw and a cup of shitty coffee. Will feels too dizzy to eat and his stomach hurts. He can feel the bruises on his side and face throbbing and his mouth hurts so bad he can hardly speak, let alone move his swollen tongue and cheeks to swallow.

"You're going to want to eat." Hannibal points out, and Will shakes his head.

"Not hungry." he says, and Hannibal raises an eyebrow. He helps himself to Will's coffee and Will lets him, notices how much cream and sugar Hannibal puts in to mask the taste. It doesn't appear to work when Hannibal grimaces at the cup and replaces it on Will's tray.

"Why did you save me? Why are you here?" Will blurts. Hannibal raises his light eyebrows and considers him.

"I saved you because you interest me, and I couldn't bear to see something unique in this world become guttered out." he says bluntly. "And I'm here because I can protect you, if you want, from future attacks."

"You don't think I can take care of myself?" Will asks sarcastically, remembering the way Buzz-cut caught and held him like a hooked fish. He would have almost certainly been killed if it weren't for Hannibal's rescue, but now he's curious what part of him that Hannibal finds interesting. Will's the most boring person he knows, so maybe Hannibal's lying and just wants Will for a quick fuck and after won't call on him ever again.

"The man that was killed at the bar has other alliances." Hannibal says. "His gang will know that you were the last person he went after, and now they're going to be finishing the job."

"I'm not the one who killed him." Will says hotly.

"They don't know that. All they know is that you humiliated their leader, lead him to a back alley, and now the only thing left of him is the stink of bleach."

"What the hell did you do with the body?" Will demands, and then hesitates. "Wait, no, never mind, I don't want to know. The less I hear about your murder clean up details the fewer nightmares I'll have. You're saying I've got a gang of angry bikers after me because of you?"

"Would you rather I hadn't saved you?"

“I don’t know,” Will admits. “Not like I have a lot to lose if I die.”

“You also don’t have a lot to lose if you simply run.” Hannibal points out.

“Why should I run? I have nothing, no money, no property, a shit car, and a dead-end job. Maybe the gang will just take my whiskey. Got lots of that.”

“They’re going to take your life. Blood for blood, an eye for an eye. Maybe if you went on a spree and wiped them out first, you’ll be able to return to your alcohol and dead life. I understand wanting to go out in a blaze of glory, but suicide by gang is still suicide. They won’t be able to catch you. You’re smarter than them.”

You don’t know me, Will wants to argue, but he stays quiet. He realizes that he really, really, doesn't want to go back to his old way of living. But he also has no idea what he’s going to do, where he’s going to run.

“Come with me.” Hannibal says, as if reading Will’s mind. “The road is lonely. My mind stagnates without something new in my life. I will accompany you everywhere we go, and pay for your rooms, your food, your bike-”

“You want a doll.” Will interrupts. “You found this unhappy little small town guy and now you want to see how long he’ll last riding with the biker gangs. Maybe you’re just going to sell me into sex slavery and be done with it.”

“I am not a pimp.” Hannibal says firmly. “And I am also not fond of listening to wild accusations. I understand you are angry and scared, and rightfully so, but I can promise you, the last thing I would ever do is sell someone into that kind of horror. I’m asking you to think about it. Think about what you’ll be missing out on if you turn away. And think about how you’re going to defend yourself when they come for you if you do stay.”

It’s on the tip of Will’s tongue to say, “Fine, I’ll do it. I’ll come,” even though he doesn't know this man, doesn't know what it will mean to join his gang, heck, he doesn’t even know where they’re going, but anything has to be better than going back to his empty house and living for the weekend when he goes home and drinks. Hannibal holds up a hand, stopping him.

“Don’t make any decisions yet,” he says, “I want to see you again, but if you’re coming with me you’re making several life choices that cannot be taken back. I’ll be in town for a week. It will take that long to arrange things.”

Will nods. “Of course.” he says. Hannibal stands up to leave and Will starts to say something, but stops.

“What?” Hannibal asks.

“It’s just...Why are you doing this? What do you see in me?”

Hannibal meets Will’s eyes for a second and now, finally, there’s a glimmer of emotion in the depths of his pupils. It might be something else besides cold hunger, but Will can’t be sure.

“You have darkness.” Hannibal says, quietly. “The things you could do.” There is a hint of longing in his voice. “It’s amazing what a little adventure can bring out in people.”

Hannibal leaves the coat behind when the nurses kicks him out. Will gets dressed in Hannibal’s Black Sabbath shirt and worn jeans and thinks about the fork in his metaphorical road. He thinks about it while he gets discharged at the front desk and signs hundreds of insurance papers. He thinks about while driving, steering on autopilot. He thinks about it until he pulls into his own driveway and sits in his car until he can’t think about anything anymore.

He lets himself into his cold house and heats up an old can of soup and eats it in bed, in Hannibal’s shirt with his bare legs goose pimpling in the cold of his bedroom. He has to drink his soup through a straw because of his mouth hurting too much for a spoon. He dozes after, careful not to roll over on his side because then his hurt shoulder would be pressed into the pillow and that would be agony.

He takes his meds, cleans his wounds, and thinks about the possibility of spending the rest of his life on the road, riding bikes with a gang, cheap food, cheap motels. He could actually see some of the world other than this nowhere county he’s been living in. He’d wear whatever ripped up grunge nonsense it would take to make him fit in and in exchange he would finally have a clan to be with, some people besides himself for company.

It’s a nice dream, a possibility, but it comes with one hell of a price tag.

His piece of shit house is in the middle of butt-fuck nowhere, set way back from the road without any neighbors for miles. If a motorcycle gang out for vengeance wanted a private place to kill his, they would have no look no further.

He is lonely.

He has his dogs, of course. He trains the K-9 forces used for drug sniffing and self defense for police work, and most of the mutts stay at the training grounds. Will has his favorites- dogs he’s worked with for so long they’re practically his own housepets. He smuggles them home with him on rough weeks. ‘Vacation time’ Will prefers to call it. He has his own pack going, every dog with a different personality and rank within the group. They roam the property and enjoy the little treats he slips them, and in return they provide quiet company. It’s his little family.

When Will finally sees his stab wound, after a shower the night he returns home, it’s not quite as bad as he expected. The entry point is clean, a neat sliver into his flesh and the skin around it is purpled with congealed blood. The stitches hurt too bad to touch. The nurses warned him that any kind of strenuous activity would reopen the wound- limiting him from even raising his arm above his waist for the next week or so.

He calls in sick for the week and sleeps on the couch, waking up from nightmares that involve a gutted Buzz-cut coming for him with a herd of wild dogs that have broken bottles for teeth. He dreams of drowning in oceans of ink, takes deep breaths and lets himself slip

under, treading gratefully back into sleep only to see wide rolling eyes and an empty body cavity waiting to greet him.

Some nights he's back in the bar, locked inside with unknown faces hemming him in. The dancefloor is sprayed with blood. He's looking for someone but can never find them.

By the fourth day, a Wednesday, he has fewer nightmares. Fewer, not none.

He took Buzz-cut's jacket home, left it on the kitchen counter where he dropped it when he first came in. Somebody, probably Hannibal, has washed the blood stains out, but Will can still smell iron and copper on it and it stinks up his kitchen, spreads to his bedroom where he smells it in his dreams.

He examines the patch on the back, a foaming dog head outlined in green with the words 'Dog Pack' painted underneath. He guesses that Buzz-cut's gang all wears the same sigil, and rips the patch off, puts it with the coat in the back of his closet and covers them with some sheets.

On a rainy Thursday, Will drives out to the nearest place that sells guns and buys a handgun because he's paranoid. It's really pouring by the time he heads home and he almost doesn't see the motorcycle following him in the rain. It's not Hannibal's bike, the engine growl is different. Will pulls the car over at a gas station and watches the bike go by, shadow long and dark in the beam of his headlights. He can see the person riding isn't one of Hannibal's gang; he has a jacket just like Buzz-cut's with the same foaming dog patch on it. The rider has a dark helmet on but Will knows he's looking at him, watching, waiting.

Will goes home drinks too much again, trying to drown his nightmares and decisions in Jack Daniels.

He thinks about all the worst kind of people in the world- murderers, kidnappers, and monsters of the like- and about leaving an unhappy life to go riding with one.

It's been six days since he saw Hannibal. On Saturday morning, the doorbell rings, and not as drunk as he would like to be, Will opens the door, expecting one of his neighbours.

"Hey," he says, blinded by the morning light after spending a sleepless night in his house with all the blinds shut. The figure on his front porch responds by kicking him soundly in the kneecap and Will goes down, crashing onto his bruised ribs and rolling over quickly out of instinct when a heavy boot comes crashing down where his head was.

It's not one of his neighbors.

There is a flash of sunlight against a steel blade and Will throws himself back, hits the edge of his door frame. He's fast enough to prevent a knife to the chest, but not fast enough to get back into the house where his gun is.

The guy trying to kill him is big; he gets a glimpse of the Dog Pack patch on his coat when the man backhands him, hard. Hannibal was right, Will thinks, as the man grabs his shirt and

drags him into his house. He should have been more worried about Buzz-cut's gang. He thought Hannibal was just trying to scare him into coming with him.

The dogs are all out on a run somewhere; not even his defense trained pack is here to help him. He's thrown onto his couch and takes a steel toed boot to his ribs, right on the bruised one. The man backs off to lock the door as Will dry heaves from pain, vision swimming in black spots. He's helpless again, little rabbit Will about to get it from the Big Bad Wolf, and there's nobody around to jump in at the nick of time. he doesn't want to die like this.

Will's breath comes back to him in a rush and he can uncurl. He pushes himself off the couch with a blind fury rising beneath his skin. The man swings his blade again and Will throws up a hand, catches the knife against bone and grips it tight as he can, steel slipping from the blood. He doesn't feel it.

He ducks when the man throws a punch at his head and comes up swinging, catches him in the mouth with his cut up elbow and wrenches the knife away by twisting it viciously out of the other man's grip. The biker is big, sure, but Will is fast and is fueled by something dark and scary inside him waking up. He kicks the man as hard as he can between the legs, hits him square where it's the softest. The man falls to a knee, but he's not in as much stunning pain as Will had hoped. He kicks him again in the face, hears the crunch of a nose.

'That's for my ribs, you son of a bitch.' Will thinks.

He tosses the knife blindly behind his and backs up until he's against the kitchen counter. He fumbles in the drawers and gets his hands on his gun.

He's having trouble closing his right hand so he pulls back the barrel with his left and unclicks the safety with his thumb.

The front door is thrown open with a crash, and both Will and the man turn in time to see Will's dog pack tearing in. The biggest dog lunges for the man and sinks his teeth into a thigh. The rest follow example with collective roars of fury, darting in with savage rips to the man's jacket and arms, yanking at his legs.

"What the fuck?" The man screams, clutching his leg. Will is standing stock still, watching as the dogs tear past the man's coat and start attacking his soft middle.

"Call them off-" the man cries before delivering a savage kick to a dog at his ankle.

Will's shirt feels wet for some reason and he looks down at a copper stain spreading at his shoulder. The stab wound stitches must have ripped during the fight, but he can't feel any pain.

If the door is shut and there's nobody around to hear, does a dying man still make a noise?

Will puts the gun down, out of reach, and makes no move to help.

The man tries to lunge at Will but a dog delivers a bite to the side of his head and the man howls in pain, tears the animal off of him and keeps coming. Will doesn't know which dog

springs first, but a tan hound charges the man's face and slashes into it. All the other dogs join the fray with renewed energy, snarling and barking savagely. Another dog latches into the man's neck and the man convulses He tries to pull at the animal's fangs buried in his neck but his arms are too ripped up to be much help.

Finally, as if he was woken from a trance, Will's vision comes back into focus and he realizes what is happening. He yells, rushing into the riot of animals and pulling them off the man one by one. He yanks the dog off the man's neck and flesh comes with it, exposing gore through an arc of blood that spatters across Will's face.

He wrestles the last dog off the man and stops, looking down with his mouth open, blood on his hands. It's too late for him to do anything- the man's eyes are rolled back and red foam dribbles from his open mouth onto the floor. His blood seeps up between his shirt material like a Rorschach ink splatter test.

All at once, the house is silent.

Will gets shakily to his feet and wavers, falls back against the couch and slides to the floor. He looks down at the blood on his hands and back to the man on the floor, trying to piece together what caused things to escalate so fast.

The dogs come running back and pour over Will like a furry tide, worried and sniffing at the blood on his hands. One or two of them circle the biker's body curiously with the hair on their backs raised and growls throbbing in their throats. A few others lap at the blood pooling on the floor. Will grabs a dog and holds it tight against him, buries his face in it's fur and screams.

All You Leave Behind

Chapter Notes

All You Leave Behind by Hannah Cartwright

Can you leave a light on for me, the spaces solidify.
Sleeping with your eyes wide open, as black as the darkest sky.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There is a body in his house. A man dead by his hand.

Sort of.

Will locks himself in his bathroom and turns the shower to blazing hot, sits on the floor of the tub with his clothes on while the water swirls pink under his bare feet and he screams until his voice is hardly a raspy whisper.

He gets out only when the water has turned cold and his lips are blue, and now he's shaking so hard he can hardly pull his wet clothes off from where they are plastered to his skin. He changes into some dry clothes he had thrown in his hamper and examines his wounds once again in the mirror, feeling like he did that night at the bar.

His face is swollen and about half the stitches in his shoulder stab wound are ripped out with the threads hanging loose. He's having trouble trying to breathe and takes short gasps of air, feels lightheaded, but he can't tell if that's from shock or his hurt ribs. He ties up his hand with a ragged towel and bleeds through it quickly, stuffs toilet paper against his palm and bleeds through that too. It doesn't really hurt, but that's probably because it's deep. Worryingly deep. But there's a dead man on his floor and things are going to start moving very quickly now.

Back in his living room, the body has leaked out over his hardwood floors and the dogs are busy nosing at it in interest. Will shoos them outdoors and watches them romp in the open fields like nothing has happened. He envies them.

Will feels remarkably calm about the whole thing. It's probably shock, but it feels like a natural progression of his life, a step forward like graduating high school or having a first kiss. Of course Buzz-cut's gang came to kill him here. It wasn't paranoia making him look over his shoulder all week and there's not going to be any safety in his life after this. He has spent all of his 30 years waiting for something to happen. The fight at the bar and now, this mortal destruction at his own hand, has woken him up, seems to have cleared his mind like good exercise. That anger that rose in him when he was in control earlier still has tendrils in his heart, and nothing is going to be able to suppress it again. Not whiskey, not a life of solitude. He guesses Hannibal was right about his 'darkness'.

This man isn't going to be the only one coming after him, Will realizes. The rest of the gang will show up at his door as soon as they realize the man they sent after him hasn't reported back. The sooner Will gets moving, the better.

He throws clothes in a bag, not looking at what he is packing and not caring. He washes the knife off in the sink and pours in some bleach after so a forensics team won't find his blood in the blades of the garbage disposal. He finds a sheath for the knife in a box under his bed and tucks the covered blade into his boot. He unloads his bullets into his shoulder bag and stuffs his empty gun in after.

His hand is numb. His shoulder is numb. He is numb.

At the door he pauses and looks back at his house. He's lived here for all of five years, but he is not sentimental about leaving. Part of thinks he might be, but no. his time here has just been spent, not lived.

He hasn't packed any memorabilia from childhood friends or letters from family members, has nothing on his person to identify him except for a driver's license in his wallet. He figures it will take a day or so for the gang to find the man's corpse, but doubts an official police investigation will take place. Maybe in a month his neighbors will notice his house sitting empty, and by then any forensic evidence of what took place hise will have faded into weird stains on the hardwood. He'll probably be brushed off as a loner who wandered off in the woods to kill himself. The only regret he has is he's leaving some books he never finished, but he can't carry them with his in his knapsack. He'll pick up copies somewhere else.

Once his bag is filled he pours himself a whiskey and sits for a while, waiting to see if he's going to start caring. It's hard to drink when his heart is pounding so hard his hand shakes but if he angles the glass carefully he can tip it back into his mouth without much effort. His shoulder hurts in a deep way- he can't quite feel it but he's very aware of it. He thinks he might have a fever. He swallows a handful of pain pills and washes it down with alcohol.

He remembers Buzz-cut's leather coat in his closet, and gets it out. It fits him like it was made for him. He feels weird wearing clothing that was on a corpse, and feels even weirder that he and Buzz-cut were the same shoulder width. In the hallway mirror he looks a bit off, as if the coat doesn't quite match who he's trying to be.

In the living room he takes a good hard look at the man he killed, commits it to memory. If he could draw, he'd be able to remember this scene in such detail he could sketch in the lines around the man's eyes. He pulls Buzz-cut's patch out of his pocket, smoothes it against his leg, and drapes it over the man's face like a burial shroud. he feels better about leaving him on the floor.

On the front porch he hesitates when his pack runs up to him. There is blood on their muzzles, their paws leaving red trails through the grass. He leans down and greets them one by one, thanks them for saving him. They cock their ears like they understand what he's saying. Will swallows back a lump forming his his throat and knows he can't leave them.

Will steps off the porch, doesn't bother to lock the door, and whistles to his pack. They all leap into his car, tongues out in excitement. He gets in with them and starts the engine.

It's late at night when he pulls into the cafe parking lot. There is a single motorcycle under a streetlight near the front door.

Will opens the door and the jingling bell alerts the staff. The vintage jukebox is playing some old record in the corner. The waitress that dotes on him approaches but stops dead when she sees him. Will looks down at himself and realizes his clothes are bloodstained from his still leaking shoulder wound and he stinks of iron. There is blood running from his hand too- he hadn't noticed he bled through the bandage he stuck on before he arrived.The waitress's face is pale.

"Do you need me to call an ambulance?" she asks.

"No need." A voice interrupts. They both turn to see a specific biker with maroon eyes who approaches them easily. The goddamn music swells when he stands a little too close in Will's space and there is pride in the corners of his dead eyes.

"You made it." he says simply, as if they were meeting for drinks. Will can't smile because his facial muscles are too sluggish to respond but in that instant he feels like he made the right decision. Hannibal takes in his new coat with a nod of approval.

"Come with me," Hannibal says and takes his wrist, leads him outside with a nod to the waitress who watches them go in confusion.

Under the streetlamp, Hannibal rustles around in his motorbike saddlebags and comes up with a medical satchel. He makes Will lean against his motorcycle and washes the wound on his hand. Will feels like a stray dog that is being inspected and cleaned up by the vet. He's too drunk to care about the way Hannibal's holding his hand to wash it.

Hannibal turns to his other hand and checks for a wound.

"Oh," Will says, "Um, that's not my...not my own blood." His voice is whispery and raspy from the screaming earlier.

Hannibal flicks his light eyes up to Will's.

"Someone came after me." Will explains. "The, uh, a guy from the gang got me at my house…we fought.."

"What happened?"

"He..was killed." Will says simply. Saying it aloud makes it feel real. "I got inside my house and knocked him down, then my dogs...g-got ahold of him when he tried to get back up." He stands up suddenly and lurches to the side of the building to throw up into an ashtray. He coughs and retches and wipes his mouth, which is a mistake when he gets a noseful of the smell of blood and he gags. Hannibal has followed him over, still holding a pad of gauze. He

stands at a respectable distance while Will throws up, then gently lifts up the hem of his own shirt, exposing his abs, and uses his clothing to wipe the sweat from Will's forehead. Will props his heavy head up against Hannibal's cool hand when the biker feels for a temperature.

"You need to rest." he says gently. "We can clean you up better at the hotel."

"Aren't you supposed to take me out to dinner first?" Will mumbles and is rewarded with a suggestion of a smile from his leather-clad nurse.

Hannibal notices the blood on Will's shoulder. He reaches for him but Will shies away, like a hurt dog. It's instinctual, he can't help it. Hannibal soothes him like he might bite.

"We can look at that later." He promises.

"Sorry. It's..i don't know, it's just-"

"It is fine." Will can't meet Hannibal's eyes but he knows that the other man isn't offended.

"Lemme get my stuff." Will says, and Hannibal takes his car keys from him, gets the bag from his car, and slings it over his shoulders. "What should I do with my car?" Will asks.

"Leave it here for tonight. We will make proper decisions in the morning."

"What about your gang? Won't they wonder where you are?"

"They know I'm with you."

They ride, this time Will hanging on the back of the bike with his arms around Hannibal's middle. He can enjoy himself now, and the pain pills, combined with the whiskey in his bloodstream, make him feel as if they're flying. Like in E.T., when the boy is riding his bike across the moon to take the alien home. He laughs quietly to himself and enjoys the ride.

Everything passes in a liquid blur until Will finds himself where he is now, sitting in a beat up couch in a badly-lit motel room.

"Your shoulder?" Hannibal prompts from the bathroom, washing his hands.

"My stitches ripped out." Will calls back. He swallows dryly.

When Hannibal comes back Will has already unbuttoned his shirt but keeps it on. It takes a clinical touch from the biker for Will to expose his shoulder, the raw wound trickling blood down his chest.

In professional mode, Hannibal swipes the wound with a cotton swab and threads a medical needle.

"Have you taken anything for pain?" he asks. Will nods.

“Whiskey. Percocet. Maybe a little too much of both.”

“That explains the lack of wincing as I cleaned your wounds.”

“Maybe you’re just good at fixing people back up. Are you a doctor?”

“I was.” Hannibal says. He puts on a pair of latex gloves and pulls out the rest of Will’s stitches. It doesn’t hurt, just itches as the thread slides through his skin. Hannibal holds Will’s shoulder steady with one hand as he begins to sew him back up. “I worked as a trauma surgeon for many years.”

“Why’d you quit?” Will murmurs. He’s watching Hannibal’s eyes as the biker works, taking in the way his eyelashes cast shadows over his cheeks.

“I killed someone.” Will raises his eyebrows in surprise. “Or rather, I couldn’t save them.”

Will considers this as Hannibal dabs gel onto the fresh stitches.

“What do you do now?”

“I’ve kept my medical license and ride the roads.”

“Got enough vacation time built up for that kind of lifestyle?”

Hannibal ties off the last stitch and cuts the thread with a pair of tiny scissors. “I work odd jobs, here and there. Mostly I travel. See the world. Cook.”

Will wants to ask more questions, wants to ask a hundred things, but it seems he’s reached the limits of his strained voice and all that comes out when he opens his mouth is a whisper.

Hannibal finds a thermometer and makes Will hold it under his tongue. Will doesn’t see the number but Hannibal seems only mildly concerned.

“Slight fever. Probably due to stress.”

Hannibal stands up and gestures for Will to stand up too.

He points him to the bathroom. “Do not get your stitches or bandages wet. Maybe it would be better for you to take a bath instead of a shower.”

“Mmm.”

In the mirror, the bruise on Will’s side has darkened into an angry red. He stands naked while the bathtub fills and looks at his pink stained hands that he couldn’t clean the dead man’s blood off of.

He sucks in a shuddering breath when he slips beneath hot water, and in the quiet, steamy bathroom, Will finally relaxes.

He feels so dizzy that he puts his head in his hands and presses into his palms to keep himself grounded. He's floating, adrift in chemicals that float through his nerve system and time starts to swim past his in heartbeats.

"Will?"

It might have been minutes later, or hours. The water is light pink from washed off blood. Hannibal is in the not-so steamy bathroom with Will and has toed off his boots at the door, taken his leather jacket off. He looks somehow smaller without it. His muscled arms are exposed and he has tattoos spiraling down to his wrists but Will's eyes are too blurry from sleep to see what they are.

"You didn't lock the door," Hannibal says, "And you didn't answer when I knocked. I assumed you fell asleep."

Will doesn't care that he's naked, but he does care about the way Hannibal looks at his body. He can see the way the biker takes in his ribcage, the swell of flesh around his belly button, his thighs. Will's throat is dry and he doesn't move, doesn't even breathe to preserve this frozen moment. There is heat rising in his cheeks that has nothing to do with the warm water.

Then Hannibal sees the bruise on his ribs and the breathless moment is dropped. He slides a towel from the rack, takes Will by the hand to help him stand up. He lets Will lean his wet self against Hannibal's clothes before he wraps his up in the towel like a child or a recently bathed dog.

"How long was I asleep?" Will croaks as Hannibal sits him down on the toilet and examines his ribs.

"Only for a little while. How did you get this bruise?"

"Got kicked." Will chuckles and winces. "Kicked him back."

Hannibal smiles for real this time and places gentle, clinical hands on Will's ribs and feels the bruise. Will stiffens but doesn't flinch away.

"No broken ribs." Hannibal concludes. "But do be gentle on yourself in the future. Can you walk?"

"Not very far." The pills and alcohol have finally started to wear off, and Will is so stiff all over he probably wouldn't have been able to get out of the tub by himself. Everything hurts. Everything is way too much effort.

He hobbles out into the bedroom of the motel room, Hannibal supporting him until he can sit on the side of one of the beds. He's still naked but it's too dark in the bedroom for Hannibal to see him properly. He feels kind of gross with his bare body on the coverlet so he struggles under the sheets and when he hits the pillow he sighs so hard he's afraid he's bruised another rib. He pulls the thin blanket as high as he can over his shoulder, shivering.

Hannibal sits in the chair by Will's bed, a dark presence by his head.

The shaking stops.

“I’ll probably have nightmares.” Will manages to whisper.

Hannibal hums in agreement. “If you need me to wake you, I will.”

Will has a moment to be comforted before he falls asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Don't worry, we'll find out about Will's dogs very soon :3

Blood Hands

Chapter Notes

Blood Hands by Royal Blood

Took a lonely feeling
Just to let the meaning
Sink like the sun goes down
Never close to heaven
Felt my feet were burning from the same red hot ground

Will sleeps like the dead and wakes up first the next morning, his body unused to sobriety. He lies in bed with his eyes still closed and doesn't feel anything for a blissful minute. His consciousness eventually catches up with a kick to the skull in the form of wicked hangover.

When he tries to sit up he falls back in pain because the bruise on his ribs hurts like he's been stabbed. And speaking of which, his shoulder burns so bad he wishes he was still asleep. He opens his eyes to the motel room flooded with morning. The room, much like his thoughts, appears less dismal in the light of day.

He stands up carefully, still naked in the early sun, and looks out the window to see a dirty parking lot and trees beyond. Its a nice day for Virginia weather. Will finds the towel he used last night on the floor and wraps it around himself, puts the coffee on. He watches Hannibal sleep in the next bed over; the biker is wearing a black wife beater and men's boxers for pajamas and lies curled tightly on his side.

Will finds his knapsack and shuts the bathroom door, fills a cup with water brimming over the sides and drinks the whole thing down without stopping. He repeats this three times and finds a bottle of ibuprofen in a pair of his jeans, downs three for his wicked headache. He examines his new stitches and finds them in a clean, neat row that holds tightly and hurts a hellavua lot. His cut hand won't move very well, but he can clench and unclench his fingers- which is a good sign. His ribs hurt like a bitch. His throat feels like he's suffering strep but he knows it's just his vocal chords recovering from yesterday. He has to rest against the counter from walking across the room and cups a hand protectively over his stab wound, as if sheltering it would make it hurt less.

He pulls a clean shirt from his bag, not one of Hannibal's but his own dependable flannel, and wiggles into some pants. The person in the mirror he recognises as himself has dark shadows under his eyes and a rather waxy complexion this morning. Will doesn't feel 100%, he doesn't think he ever will again, but he's definitely not going to be able to talk much today. Or walk around. Or even really leave the room. He hopes Hannibal's gang isn't moving out right away because all Will's going to be good for the rest of the day is sleeping.

He lurches back into the bedroom and falls onto the sheets, waking Hannibal in the next bed over.

“I’m glad you didn’t run off in the night.” the biker murmurs, sitting up in his bed and thumbing the sleep out of his eyes. His accent is much rougher and his voice is thick with sleep. “Didn’t know how you would be able to with your wounds, but still. How’s the hangover?”

Will groans in response.

“Sonno, uno scuro,” Hannibal says in some melodic, rolling language. he stands up and stretches, pops his back in what sounds like 15 places. “Riposo farà bene.”

“Italian?” Will manages to whisper, and Hannibal nods.

“Parli esso?”

Will can only guess at what that means. He shakes his head against the rumpled sheets. Hannibal sighs.

“I’m going to take care of your car.” Hannibal continues, gathering some clothes hung neatly in the closet and folded in the dresser, “I’ll be locking it into storage under your name. But I insist you stay here and rest. You will be safe, as long as nobody knows you’re here. Did you tell anyone where you were headed?”

Will snorts. Shakes his head.

“Good. I will be in town, arranging things for when we leave. I hope you have said all your goodbyes.”

When Will wakes up next, it’s to the smell of something cooked and wonderful and he sits up before his eyes are open

.

It’s dark outside and the wind is roaring like waves pounding against the motel.

Hannibal has the table set with ceramic bowls of something delicious and he’s twiddling with a phone in the chair beside Will’s bed. He looks up when Will rises from the sheets.

“I made you dinner,” he says as Will gingerly climbs out of bed. “Something easy to digest, I would think.”

“Thanks- wow, uhh, thank you.” Will rifles through the bag. He hasn't eaten since...the day before yesterday? Maybe a bowl of cereal before he was attacked at his house. Shit, was the really only yesterday?

Will sits at the table across from Hannibal and forks some kind of egg sausage mix carefully between his lips, wincing when he has to lift the silverware because it tugs on his shoulder wound.

Hannibal sets his phone aside and helps himself to the meal, putting a paper napkin on his lap and arranging his cutlery in neat rows beside his plate. He also hands Will some pills and deliberately puts a bottle of pain reliever on the table so Will knows he's not being poisoned. He watches Will eat with a fascination that should feel intrusive.

"I have plans settled." Hannibal says. He eats slowly, savouring the food. Will can't tell if it's because it's tastes amazingly good to him or if Hannibal treats all his meals like it was his last. "I have arranged a way to clear your name from the gang that's hunting you. The relationships I've cultivated with past jobs has earned me credit with the the Azure Razor Posse to get us across the border into Canada, where we'll settle your score with the Dog Pack gang. For a fee of course, but the job contract I signed into will pay for it."

"Azure Razor?"

Hannibal pries the cap off a foreign beer from the take out bag and offers Will a bottle of water instead. Will accepts and takes a grateful swallow.

"They're a gang with control over a great deal of the cocaine traffic between North Dakota and Canada." Hannibal says, "They're the enforcement arm, but the point is that I have power and a cultivated reputation which means they'll do me this one favor."

Will takes a moment to digest this. "When the hell did you make friends with a drug cartel?"

"On my vacation time, of course." Hannibal gives him a look that on anyone else would be a sly smile, but while Hannibal's face doesn't change the emotion is somehow conveyed.

"So only one job in Canada? What do you have to do, kill someone?"

Hannibal is quiet.

Will sets his fork down on his plate. "Wait, seriously?"

"No, I do not have to kill them. Just frighten them."

Will hesitates. "What the fuck do you do for a living?"

"I 'frighten' people."

"You're doing a good job with it right now."

Hannibal gives him a minimalist smile and gestures at Will's plate.

"Eat," he says.

Will finishes his dish and scrapes the bowl clean. With some food in his stomach and water in his bloodstream (and good sleep, for once), the headache he's had for the past week is starting to ease.

"So how do you 'frighten' someone? Do you leave horse heads in their bed or something?"

Hannibal doesn't get the reference. "No. The method of fear is up to me. The man I have been paid to scare is part of the drug trade and he hasn't been returning full quota lately, it seems. The gang in charge of the trade in that area would take care of it themselves, but this particular man has a history of violence. Rather than risk their own members, I get called on to send a message."

"So you want me on this mission?" Will murmurs and finishes off his water in a smooth swallow. "I should probably mention I'm a deadbeat dog trainer, not a special ops biker."

"You're not going to be there." Hannibal clears away the plates and refuses Will's offer of helping clean up. "I'll be trusting you to wait with the rest of the gang nearby and watch for police intervention."

"As long as you're not expecting me to ride all the way to Canada on the back of your motorbike."

Hannibal smiles (or an equivalent of a smile with his eyes) and throws away the beer bottles. "No. The rendezvous is in Fargo next Wednesday, and I'm imagining the Dog Pack has discovered the loss of one of their members and are tracking us down even now. We'll get you a bike tomorrow and leave the next morning."

"Are we going to be safe here with the gang hunting us down?"

"Do not worry about that." Hannibal says, stripping his shirt off and unhooking his pants. Will can't help the way his eyes follow Hannibal's hands or the way his throat clicks audibly in a swallow.

Hannibal looks up at Will as he kicks his boots off. "I see." Hannibal says and he folds his pants over one arm, lining up the seams like they're dress pants and not acid washed skinnies. "Are you homosexual, Will?"

Will blushes and looks away. "Bi, maybe? I-i mean, i've never been with a man, but…"

Hannibal considers this and runs a hand through his kept hair. It's like watching a knight take off armour, the way he's letting down his formal guards of politeness and aloofness. "I see." he repeats, and shuts himself in the bathroom. Will hears him brushing his teeth and isn't sure whether to feel hurt or intrigued. Maybe Hannibal doesn't find him attractive. Maybe Hannibal already has a significant other.

Will sighs and lies back on the bed. He turns on his side and rests his face on his palm and spends the rest of the night wondering what's in store for him next.

The next morning Will pulls on clean jeans and a dark shirt and tries to calm his curls with some gentle combing with his fingertips but finally gives up when he sees he's doing more harm than good to his hair. The bruise on his face is darker today, a purple blossom riddled with veins blushing across his face from his forehead. It's pretty nasty looking. Will considers

trying to use concealer to cover it up but there's no way he would have enough. He brushes his bangs over the worst of it and wishes his eyes weren't so bloodshot.

Back in the bedroom, Hannibal hefts himself out of bed and passes Will on the way to the bathroom. Will hears him run water for a shower.

He finds a set of mismatched motel coffee cups and pours steaming coffee, remembering the way Hannibal put cream and sugar in his coffee and finding a few packs of splenda on the mini fridge in the corner. Hannibal emerges from the bathroom and joins Will at the table a bit later. The biker pours in all three splenda packets and stirs, sips, makes a face, and stirs some more.

His wet bangs have come loose from their hold and fall across his face. his sleeve tattoos are geometric lines going down one arm and swirls and figures going down the other. There is a beautifully detailed human skull tattooed in the seam of his shoulder blades on his back.

Will can tell Hannibal notices the way he is trying to cover up his facial bruise with his hair but the biker doesn't say anything about it.

They eat in silence for a bit. Will is handed more pain pills that he swallows gratefully with his coffee. His stitches kept his awake in pain last night and he's got a low-grade migraine. His hand has stiffened up to the point he can't grip a glass with it. The bruise on his side has darkened into a bluish-purple with hints of green but Will can sit up and move around and doesn't want to die as much anymore. He has stubbornly refused to think of a certain corpse left in a certain house or a certain gang out for his blood.

The motorcycle is gleaming, built dark and heavy and powerful like a bulldog or a clydesdale horse. It's lower sitting than Hannibal's motorcycle, wider and stronger, and when Will swings a leg over the warm seat it fits beneath him like it was made for him. He sighs and clutches the handle grips, puts a finger over the throttle and imagines the bike twisting beneath him and carrying him over the roads like a steed into battle. He wants it.

Hannibal is arguing with a salesman and finally sets down way too many hundred dollar bills for a normal person to have in their pocket, and the salesman shuts up and starts filling out paperwork.

When they first approached the bike dealership, the manager couldn't stop gaping at Will's bruised face, so Will self-consciously slinked away to wander amidst the motorbikes. Since Hannibal didn't make a big deal about the bruises, Will had almost forgotten about them.

Finally, the bike is paid for and officially becomes Will's most prized possession. Well, it technically belongs to Hannibal, since the biker wouldn't accept Will's offers of paying most of it himself.

It's the nicest thing that anyone's ever given him.

A few laps around the parking lot later and Hannibal has that ghost of a smile on his face and has proclaimed Will a "natural born rider".

Will insists on purchasing his own helmet and finds one with a spray painted wolf on it. It reminds him of the dogs he left behind and he smiles painfully at himself.

"I need to check something," He tells Hannibal once they stand alone in the parking lot. Hannibal looks curious but doesn't ask any questions.

Will rides out by himself to a farm at the edge of town. He looks over his shoulder every five seconds, expecting a pack of bikers descending on him with broken bottles and knifes itching for blood, but the roads are empty behind him.

When he roars up the dirt road, a crescendo of barking starts up and Will grins, pulls his new helmet off. His furry family runs up to him with tails wagging and mouths open, and he crouches down and lets the furry tide wash over him. He's rubbing ears and laughing when other dogs butt in.

"You'll all be safe here," he tells them one by one. He's returned his pack back to the training grounds, back to their life of kennels and K-9 force training. It hurts worse than being stabbed to leave them behind, but there's no way he can take them with him.

Finally, once he's held each one and romped with them enough to leave them panting and laying around, he leaves. Rides back to the hotel with eyes burning but painfully dry.

Hannibal cooks something delicious for them and uncorks a bottle of wine. He doesn't ask why Will is quiet and doesn't try to press him. They go to bed a bit past midnight. Will is only a bit surprised to find this strange routine, itching stitches and murders feels more like home than anything ever has, despite the pain of saying goodbye to the only family he's ever going to miss.

Will wakes in the middle of the night with a violent start, as if he was falling and he caught his nails on the edge of a cliff. He struggles out of the sheets and stumbles to the bathroom, blinks against the harsh light that he clicks on. His back and hair are soaked with a cold sweat, his skin clammy. He’s probably sweated through the sheets. His stomach hurts and he’s cold now, but he can still remember little snippets of his nightmare. Something about being lost and hunting somebody down.

In the mirror, his eyes are ringed with dark purple, sunken in shadows. His shoulder is starting to heal again and it itches and hurts simultaneously, but he knows better than to scratch it. He can rub at it a bit and put creams on it, but there’s no helping it as it burns against his skin. Especially tonight.

He groans and cups his unbandaged hand under the water spout, drinks about five handfuls and splashes cold water on his face and neck. He rubs his eyes hard enough for spots to float in his vision and when he looks down at his hands they’re covered in blood.

He gasps aloud, fumbles with the water again and scrubs at his hands so hard he’s surprised he’s not taking skin off. He’s shaking so bad he can’t twist the faucet off again so he nudges it off with his elbow and rubs his hands viciously on the wash towel beside the sink.

He holds his breath and looks at his palms again. They’re perfectly clean, no trace of red on his skin. The water swirling down the drain is clear and the washcloth has no pink stains on it. The bandage on his right hand is soaked with water now but besides that there’s no reason why he should have seen blood. He even checks his face to make sure he’s not bleeding from his eyes, but no, he’s fine.

Will pulls some rather defeated towels off the hook and brings them back to bed with him. In the dark of the room he takes off his shirt and lays a towel down on the soaked sheets. He rests on of it and pulls another towel up under his chin like a blanket to soak up the sweat beading again on his neck. He is shivering as he pulls the blanket over his, but instead of cold he’s shaking in fear. His forehead is burning and his head is full of cotton.

He wishes he could flip the pillow over for the soothing cool side but he doesn't’ have the energy to rearrange himself. He wishes Hannibal would watch over him again and ease his headaches but he doesn’t wake the other man up.

He uneasily falls back asleep and his nightmares continue from where they left off.

Rouge I

Chapter Notes

Rouge I by Bird Courage

Don't you dare forget me
don't you dare regret me

The next day dawns grey and cold; no spring-like sun, but with inconsistent spattering of raindrops and the lingering rumble of far-off thunder.

Hannibal and Will pack their stuff up (all of their worldly goods fit into one of Hannibal's saddlebacks) and lock their room. They ride along empty highways, rain whipping exposed skin raw. The gang meet up point is, thankfully, at a different bar than the one Buzz-cut met his demise at.

Will parks his bike second to last in the lineup and feels a trickle of pride seeing it beside the other motorcycles.

Inside the bar, Hannibal's gang are the only customers. They greet Hannibal and stare when they see Will. Will self-consciously fiddles with the hem of Hannibal's borrowed shirt that he's wearing. He recognises the Asian woman who paid for the broken beer bottle at the cafe and the blonde woman who apparently cleaned up Buzz-cut's body in the alley. They're the only two that seem to look at Will's face instead of the presence of him.

Hannibal takes the time to introduce Will to everyone. The Asian woman shakes Will's hand and introduces herself as Beverly. Will makes an effort to look at least near her eyes and she seems satisfied with this.
The blonde woman's name is Bedelia, and her palm is as slim and seemingly fragile as the rest of her figure when they shake hands. Will makes a mental note that this is the lackey who cleans up the fucking bodies. He'll have to remember not to piss her off.

The rest of the gang is filled in on the rendezvous in North Dakota and mission to Canada. Most of the bikers here, on closer inspection, don't seem to be nearly as intimidating as they were when Will first saw them at the cafe. Maybe he's just used to Hannibal's commanding presence, but nobody here seems as tough or dark as their leader. Hannibal commands the attention of the whole table without actively trying. Everyone is tip-toe polite when speaking to him. Amongst themselves, they're much more casual.

Beverly turns to Will once everyone else has lost interest in him. "Skateboard accident?" She asks, not unkindly.

It takes a second to Will to remember to be friendly. No matter that he's anxious, the last thing he needs is to fuck up relationships in this group. His last shot at friendship, almost.

"I guess you could say that." He wishes he had something to fiddle with so he wouldn't have to force eye contact, but alas, he has no other polite choice, so he looks Beverly full in the pupils for a lengthy two seconds. She's open and smiling, with dark hair buzzed into a short mohawk; she's got piercings on her eyebrows and lip and wears thick eyeliner.

"You been with this gang for a while?" Will asks.

"Not too long with Lecter's group, no." It takes a second for Will to realize Beverly's talking about Hannibal. "I had my own gang with Jimmy and Price for a while-" She gestures to two guys arguing on her other side. "But when we all got landed in jail for drunk driving offenses it was through connections to Lecter's gang that kept us safe. I think Miriam's still serving time, though…."

"Is everyone else cobbled from different gangs?" Will asks. Beverly points to a man and a woman talking amidst themselves.

"Those two got involved with a real life serial killer crime spree. They ran away from the witness protection program and have to keep moving around. That's why they're with us." She motions to a dark haired woman across the table who introduced herself as Alana Bloom. "Bloom and Lecter used to be in medical graduate school together. I heard they used to be a thing. Now, her-" Beverly points to Bedelia. "Not sure what's up with her. I heard Lecter personally invited her to join and that the two of them used to be their own gang. They go back, but not as far as Lecter and Alana."

"Huh." Will hasn't the slightest idea how biker gangs are supposed to work, whether it's like a boat club that gets together on weekends or just bored people with bikes that hang out in bars and fight each other. But Hannibal's gang seems like a family of step siblings from different backgrounds. He worries privately for the hundredth time if he'll manage to fit in.

"What about yourself?" Beverly asks. "I think i've seen you somewhere, but I can't place my finger on it…"

"Oh, uh, I'm from around here. Kind of." Will stumbles over his own words and bites his tongue. He hates this part of conversation making. Yes, hello, I'm Will, loser who lives alone and works as a dog trainer and is also now a part time murderer. Anyone hiring a biker killer? "I mean, I didn't grow up here, but I know the area well enough. I guess Hannib- I mean, Lecter, invited me to join."

Beverly's eyes widen. "He invited you? Did he roll up with a party notice and you RSVP'd?"

"It's more complicated than that." Will's fingers are starting itch for something alcoholic to calm him down. "I kinda got him involved in a fight and he doctored me back up, then offered me a place in his gang. I don't have to be hazed to join, right?"

"No, not since the Browns left. But, wow, I mean, you don't really look like Lecter's kinda type."

“Type?”

Beverly looks around a little and shrugs. “You look kind of ....new? Not used to this? You act like this isn’t your way of life, which makes me think you didn’t grow up in a biker family. You don't know what kind of person Lecter is, yet you joined his gang. That takes balls. Not to be rude, but I don't understand what Lecter sees in you.”

“Me neither.” He mutters.

“Well, listen, Graham, it’s hard being the new guy, but I’ll help you out. Don’t show your teeth to anyone you don’t want to fight. Everyone who chooses this kind of life has the ugliest snarls. And don’t piss Lecter off.”

Apparently finished with their conversation, Hannibal and Alana stand up, and the rest of the gang follows. Someone leaves bills for the coffee and they all tramp out into the rain outside. They had parked their bikes under an overhang, but it looks wet and miserable out on the roads. Hannibal seems to materialize behind Will and touches his arm to get his attention.

“Your coat will be ruined in the rain. Here, I have a better jacket for this weather.” He hands Will a waterproof jacket and gloves. “Will you be able to control your bike with these conditions?”

Will shrugs into the coat. It smells a little bit like Hannibal, but mostly it smells like spilled rubbing alcohol and it makes his skin crawl, thinking of doctor’s offices and shots. “I think I’ll be fine. Hopefully you’ll notice if I crash.”

“That’s an encouraging endorsement.”

Hannibal leaves him to straddle his own motorbike. The group's bikes roar to life and sit humming after Hannibal revs his engine. He leans over to Will and raises his voice above the engines.

“Last chance to escape.” He says.

It startles a laugh out of Will. “What, and end my vacation before it’s begun? I’m not backing out now.”

Hannibal doesn’t smile back.

The motorbikes pull out of the lot and sweep out into the wet road to begin the long drive to North Dakota.

It’s twenty hours to Fargo from Wolf Trap, Virginia. They drive single file down the highway lanes, the roar of the bikes filling their ears and rain ripping past them. Will finds himself getting lost in the monotone of the grey world around him and the black highway stretching on forever. He watches Hannibal’s back while they ride, admiring the way the lean biker flawlessly flows into his bike and controls it. It’s like watching a jockey with their horse, two creatures moving as one.

After three hours, they pull into a rest stop and get off the bikes to stretch and get something to eat. Will turns his bike off and sits on it for a bit with his leg out as a stand, watching the other bikers talking and raiding the vending machines. His motorcycle's engine clicks as it cools down.

Will notices a man on the other side of the parking lot watching him intently. At first Will thinks it's somebody who knows him, but on closer inspection he recognises the man is part of Hannibal's gang; he had introduced himself as Miggs.
Miggs stares beadily at him and Will meets his stare levelly, but blinks first and looks away. There is something about the other man's blank stare that unnerves him. Miggs's eyes aren't flat in the way Hannibal's are; instead of the cold stare of a predator, Miggs is just empty. Like he's got nothing left alive within himself.

Will ignores him as best he can, but feels Miggs's stare prickle the back of his neck the rest of the break.

They drive for another five hours, with breaks for bathroom and stretching, and stop for dinner at a truck stop near a motel in the north-western border of Tennessee. Had it not been for the state line billboard, Will would have thought they were still in Virginia; the forests and hills look exactly the same.

Their gang blends in nicely with the truckers and other leather clad motorcycle buffs milling around the diner. Will, left behind in the parking lot, roots through Hannibal's saddlebag and comes up with Buzz-cut's leather coat. He holds it up by the tips of his fingers as if it were dirty and examines it in the wan light.

It still smells like blood, the heavy iron smell practically leaking off of it like dry ice fog.

It reeks of death.

He can't wear it; not now, hopefully, not ever. He doesn't even know what possessed him in the first place to even try it on.

He stuffs it in the very bottom of the saddlebag and washes his hands over and over in the bathroom. At the table, he looks out of place amidst the gang, being the only one without a coat, but he ignores it. Keeps his head down.

Over the meal, Will sits next to Beverly again, at the far end of the table so he can watch how the other members of the gang interact with each other. He wants to draw his own conclusions about whom to be friendly towards, and so far, it seems that the only person paying any kind of attention to him is Miggs, who is sitting apart from the group. Nobody talks to him; Will can tell he's not friendly with anyone in the gang.

Under the table, Will flexes his hurt hand over and over, as far as the cut in his palm will allow. He fears he'll never have control over it as he used to, but luckily it isn't his dominant hand.

He looks up to find Hannibal watching him on the other side of the table, his gaze like a caress. Will is caught in his eyes with a spoon of food hanging stupidly in the air. He quickly

looks down, busying himself with his meal. He is breathless in a tight kind of way somewhere in his heart. Is he blushing? He thinks he's blushing. When he glances back up, Hannibal is engaged in conversation with someone else.

Hannibal gets up before everyone else has finished and roars away on his motorbike, off to destinations unknown.

As if on silent agreement, one by one the bikers stand up from the table and get duffel bags from their motorcycles and make their way to the hotel. Will is one of the last ones done, and, seeing that Hannibal has already left, he pays for his meal and heads outside for his stuff. It's still raining hard, and Will swears under his breath when he remembers Hannibal is riding his motorbike with Will's duffel bag in his saddlebags. Will's going to have to sleep in his dirty clothes tonight. He sighs and runs a hand through his hair. It's cold out in the rain- maybe he should have taken Buzz-cut's coat. Will hunches his shoulders around his ears and hurries through the rain to the bright motel lights.

He has to pass through a couple of parked semitrailers, and as he walks between a Budweiser and Wal-Mart hauler someone calls out to him.

"Hey."

Will knows better than to stop and turn around, so he pretends not to hear and keeps walking. Like hell he's going to get beat up again. Between the next set of trailers he hears someone walking behind him and he speeds up his own gait.

"I said, hey."

It's not a man calling him, at least. Will gets within the circle of light by the motel front office, under the dry overhang, and turns around.

Behind him is an emaciated woman, literally rail thin, with thighs the size of Will's wrists and collarbone and sternum showing in stark relief under her dress. Her face looks like a sunken in, rotted fruit, like her skull is covered in skin-coloured paper. She reminds Will, horribly, of Gollum from the Lord of the Rings. This woman is the exact poster child for 'Before/After' of meth addiction, but as the 'after'.

Will can't help the little gasp he takes, and the woman visibly startles at the sound. They awkwardly stand, gawking at each other and Will's fear fades so he just feels silly.

"I don't want any trouble." He says.

"I'm not offering trouble." The woman says. Her voice is raspy and hoarse, just like Will's was the other day. She wavers on her thin legs, balancing on heels that look bigger than her head. "I'm offering company for the night."

"Company?" It clicks for him. "Sex?"

The woman raises her hands in defense. "Hey, man, anything to pay the bills. I can do anything you want, with whatever you want."

“I- um, no thanks.”

“C’mon, I know you can spare the money. Just an hour. Anything.”

“I-I don’t-”

“Hey.” Another voice enters the conflict. “Is there gonna be a fight here?”

Will and the other woman look up to see Miggs approaching, almost tiptoe quiet in the dark. He’s hulking in the rain, shorter than the sex worker but wider than her and Will combined. He gradually lumbers into the circle of light and the woman backs off.

“Just trying to do my business here,” She calls plaintively, and slinks back between the trailers. Miggs cooly watches her go.

“Lot lizard,” He explains gruffly to Will. He leads the way into the motel and Will trails behind him. “That’s the term for the whores that hang around tractor trailer yards. She was actually pretty docile; I’m sure you could have handled it yourself,” He gives Will a narrowed-eyed look over his shoulder that Will’s not sure how to interpret. “But I figured I could save you some time.” Miggs steps up to the front desk and signs into his room; pockets a key. He turns back to Will. “I don’t think I caught your name.”

“Yeah, I’m new.” Will says, stepping up to the desk. He doesn’t bother to introduce himself and there is a beat of awkward pause where the information would have been offered up in usual conversation. Miggs watches the back of Will’s head as Will gets the receptionist’s attention.

The clerk looks up at him from her phone and pops her smelly gum. “Your room’s already paid for, darlin’.”

Will remembers Hannibal’s offer of paying for everything and sheepishly pockets his money. He’s going to have to talk to that man about when Will can actually pay for himself instead of having everything handed to him.

He gets his key and turns back around to Miggs, who is still eyeing him steadily.

“Well, goodnight, then.” He says, and straightens his shoulders as he passes by the other man. He watches Miggs out the corner of his eye and sees his nostrils flare when Will brushes past. He swears he can hear the whistle of air through the man’s pig-like nose.

Will calmly turns into the hallway, finds a random staircase, and runs up four flights like he’s being chased. He peers back down the stairwell, panting loudly, but there’s nobody behind him.

He finds his room and lets himself in, locks the door with all three locks, and kicks off his shoes. He falls forward into the dark and lands on a bed that squeaks loudly in protest. The room is empty besides him.

He presses his face into the mattress, trying through sheer willpower to slow his heartbeat. He feels his pulse in his mouth. His thoughts are soured with the instinct to stay away from

this Miggs character and wondering how he could possibly avoid this man forever.

He lays there for what feels like hours while he catches his breath and considers that he may be going off the deep end of paranoia. When he looks at the alarm clock glowing at the headboard of the bed he learns he's only been panicking for about nine minutes. His head drops back to the mattress and he sighs, embarrassed with himself.

There is a knock at the door.

Will almost sprains something jumping off the bed and carefully checks the peephole to make sure it's not Miggs. Or the sex worker.

It's neither. It's Hannibal.

Will opens the door and maybe a tad too excitedly asks, "What's up?"

"I noticed you forgot your knapsack." Hannibal says simply. He holds up a plastic grocery bag along with Will's bag. "I also brought you some pain relief cream for your stitches, as well."

"Oh...Thanks." Will responds. He guesses Hannibal had left dinner early to make a run to a drugstore for this. "Do I need to pay you?"

Hannibal gives him a mild look.

"No? Alright. Just let me know when you do want me to pay for something. I'm cool being a freeloader and all, but.."

Hannibal looks over Will's shoulder into his room and asks, "May I come in?"

"Yeah, sure, of course." Will rubs at the back of his neck and flicks a switch as he leads the way inside. The room is smaller than he'd originally thought, with one bed and one chair and one tiny window that looks into the side of the building. Hannibal steps over his shoes and perches on his bed, takes out a tube of pain relieving rub.

Will coughs a little and joins Hannibal on the bed. He tries to appear casual about it but somehow he makes it seem forced. He can tell Hannibal picks up on this.

"You seemed to get along with the rest of the group." The other man comments. He doesn't mind the awkwardness of both of them staring straight ahead and talking to the wall.

"Yeah?" Will hears the doubt in his own voice and so does Hannibal.

"Yes." Hannibal responds. "I'm impressed you got along with Beverly. She tends to be closed off to small talk. Like someone I know." He glances over at Will and Will pretends to roll his eyes.

"I would please me if you got along just as easily with the rest of the group," Hannibal continues, "but I also know that you take time to open up. For example, I do not even know the whole story of the man you said you killed."

Will fiddles with the bandage on his hand. Hannibal had replaced it with a flexible band-aid before the road trip, but the sweat and grime of holding onto motorcycle handles all day have caused it to peel back from his skin and become dirty. He needs to replace it soon.

“Would you like to know? It’s not very heroic or anything. It was self-defense. Ish. And I didn’t really do it.”

“If you are willing to talk, I am willing to listen. But first-” Hannibal stands up from the bed and the tired mattress refils his imprint with a sigh. He drags the tattered chair from the corner and arranges it in front of Will, then sits in it and leans forward, looking directly at him.

Will is uncomfortable meeting his gaze directly, so he turns his face and talks to Hannibal’s left shoulder instead. As he relates the story, starting from buying the gun (and leaving out all the parts of drinking himself into a stupor the rest of the week), Hannibal nods along and doesn’t interrupt. Will eventually stands up from the bed because his legs hurt from sitting all day. He paces around the room a little bit as he talks, and finds himself relaxing into the story and glancing over at Hannibal every so often to make sure he still has his attention.

“So then I left his body on the floor, packed my stuff, and drove out to meet you.” he concludes. Hannibal purses his lips as he mulls over Will’s story. He doesn’t look directly at Will and talks as if he’s musing aloud to himself.

“You've never killed anyone before.” He says. “It's a deadly force encounter; a lot to digest.”

Will sits back down on the bed. “I have a high metabolism for it, I guess. I’ve seen death before.” He feels like he’s at a therapist’s office. He hopes Hannibal doesn’t ask him about his mother or start breaking out the Rostarchs.

“Is that why you were able to watch the man be killed?”

“No. I don’t know why I didn’t stop the pack sooner and I don’t know why I’m not crying about every day. In movies and books the main character never kills someone and goes about his merry way.” Will pauses and looks Hannibal in the face for a moment. “Maybe there’s something really wrong with me.”

Hannibal looks straight back at him. “An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is a normal reaction. This is how you cope with shock and there’s nothing wrong with that.”

Will sits back with a sigh and rubs his hands along his own thighs. He was hoping for a big revelation about himself, like, ‘surprise, you’re actually an undiagnosed sociopath who threw away his life to ride with a murderer’ or ‘you’re fucking weird; I’m signing you up for therapy’ but it seems like he’s doomed to be weirdly normal.

He glances at the bedside clock. The numbers read that it’s almost past 11 pm but Hannibal doesn’t seem to be making any indication of leaving. He’s still looking at Will expectantly.

“What did you do with your dogs?” He asks.

“Oh- I returned them back to the training grounds. I, uh, used to work as a K-9 trainer.”

“Police force?”

“Sort of. I was just there to care for the dogs. No badge or anything.”

“Ah.”

There is a beat of silence.

“So you really just want me to ride along in your motorcycle gang and make friends?” Will ventures quietly. “Like some kind of biker summer camp?”

“Is there an answer that would satisfy you?”

“The truth would be a good start.”

“The truth is that it pleases me to have you along.”

“And now we’re back to why.”

Hannibal sits back in his chair and folds his hands into his lap. If he were anyone else, it would make him look smaller, plaintive, but Hannibal’s gesture makes him appear cool and confident. He’s in control. He’s everything Will isn’t.

“Would the idea of my being lonely for company be a proper response?” Hannibal asks.

Will shakes his head. “You don’t operate like that.”

“Oh?” Hannibal raises his eyebrows minutely. “How do you know how I operate?”

“I..I-I can empathize with your situation. Easily.” Will looks away again. He hates explaining this part of himself to others. His empathy is a gift, sure, but one he can’t turn off. He can relate to anyone; the hooker in the rain, Miggs, Hannibal, even Buzz-cut. It just takes a little imagination.

“You lead, but not because you enjoy the company of others, but because you’re in control. You like the have the final word, but forcing people to do what you want isn’t as preferable as molding them to being complacent to your commands.” Will pauses, making sure Hannibal isn’t fazed by Will telling him about himself. Hannibal looks mildly surprised.

“Am I really that easy to understand?” He asks.

“Understand? No, never.” Will responds. “Nobody can ever ‘understand’ another person entirely. But knowing the basis of your personality, and watching how you carry yourself, I can formulate your motives. It’s guesswork, really.”

“It’s an incredible ability.”

“Not one I really want anymore.”

Hannibal appears interested. Will quickly changes the subject.

“What I can’t understand, though, is that you have all these people following your command- Bedelia and Beverly and everyone else- and yet you pick up a nobody from nowhere…”

“While I have those who follow what I say,” Hannibal says, “It does not mean we are friendly. I like to think of the rest of the gang as my co-workers. Is it wrong of me to want a friend?”

“Are we friends?”

“We are whatever you want us to be.”

Will tries not to think too hard about the implications that follow that. “So pure loneliness inspired you to save me and bring me along?”

“Indeed.”

“Was it your own loneliness or mine?”

Hannibal smiles very slightly. “Why not both?”

Will decides not to push it. They talk for awhile about Will’s first day of riding and Hannibal changes the bandage on Will’s hand with some material he brought with him. He dabs antiseptic cream on the wound, so gentle with it that it doesn’t hurt at all. Will remembers past doctors harshly rubbing something painful into his wounds before slapping a band-aid on, but Hannibal’s touch is soothing and careful. He wraps Will’s palm and looks at him for permission to see his shoulder stitches.

Will swallows, shy again, and undos the top buttons on his shirt to expose his shoulder. He looks away while Hannibal examines the stitches and he feels Hannibal’s breath ghost over his hypersensitive skin. The biker dabs antiseptic and pain relief gel between the seams of Will’s skin, rubs it in, and bandages him up.

“You’re so gentle.” Will blurts. Hannibal looks up at him. “I-i mean, most doctors just want to clean the wound and seal it up, but you- you’re careful with me..”

“Always, Will.” Hannibal responds easily.

Will can’t remember the last time hearing his name on someone else’s lips sounded so good.

Eventually Hannibal goes back to his own room and Will watches him go, locks the door behind him. He lets out a breath he didn’t know he had been holding.

Alone now, he changes into his pajamas (one of Hannibal’s shirts and his boxers) and flushes just a little, quickly checks the room to make sure he is well and truly alone, then tucks his nose into his collar of his shirt and inhales deeply. He brings his hands up and presses the fabric against his face.

Hannibal's cologne, while lingering in the room even after he left, is concentrated in the seams of his clothes, especially at the collar of the shirt, probably from where it got the fallout of spray cologne. It smells dark and sexy, like leather and jasmine and cognac. Like motorcycle exhaust and cigarette smoke.

Will turns off the bedroom light and squirms into bed, under layers of thin blankets with the shirt still bunched up around his nose.

Will closes his eyes and can picture it in his mind; Hannibal shirtless and dabbing at his jawline in some steamy bathroom. He would spray at his neck and Will imagines the oil running into the space between Hannibal's collarbones to stain the shirt that Will is now clutching over his mouth and nose.

Will bites his lip hard as his cock jerks in interest.

He's pulling the shirt off of himself before he really understands what he's doing and bundles it up, pushes his face into it and inhales. He tangles his hands in the fabric and shoves his hips against the mattress, groans weakly in the back of his throat. It's been so long since he's had an erection that he fills out almost immediately, becoming almost painfully hard in the space of a few breaths.

He presses his length against the rough sheets and grinds, rolls his hips experimentally but can't quite get enough friction. He untangles one hand from the shirt and shoves it down his pants, hisses when he meets heated skin. His back bows and he jerks himself quickly, thighs shaking. He's already wet enough that he doesn't need any kind of lubrication; his cock is slick with his own precome. He opens his mouth and pants into it, quiet whimpers escaping his clenched teeth. He doesn't think about the implications of it, of him clutching another man's shirt to himself and crying into it as he jerks himself off.

He presses his face so hard against the mattress that he can't breathe and comes just like that, lungs screaming for air with the scent of Hannibal's cologne in his mouth.

Open Arms, Empty Air

Chapter Notes

Open Arms, Empty Air by Unextraordinary Gentlemen

Listening to my thoughts talk in strange affected accents
done waiting for my youth to get me by
looking for that cloud of rain to burst with sound and vision rage
open arms, empty air

Will, trembling slightly with exhaustion, is the first one in the restaurant the next morning. The waitresses take pity on him hanging around outside and let him in before their shift starts. He's on his third cup of coffee by time the sun breaches the horizon.

The bell at the front door rings, announcing entry, and Will looks up as Hannibal sits across from him at the table. The waitress brings by another pot of coffee and a cup, and the two of them sip at their mugs in comfortable silence.

Will likes the way Hannibal looks in the morning, not quite put together, like his shields are in the process of coming up. He’s hunched over his cup, shoulders up, with fresh sleep in his eyes. His hair is in place but not combed all the way through. Will has an urge to brush it for him, run his hands through it to calm the snarls at the back of the biker’s head, but he sips at his coffee and resists.

“When are we leaving today?” he asks finally.

“The entire gang is riding out later this afternoon.” Hannibal responds.

“I would have slept in if i knew that.” Will quips half-heartedly.

“I’m glad you’re awake, anyways. The adventure will be yours and mine this morning. We have some errands to run.”

Will has an image of the two of them grocery shopping, picking up the dry cleaning. He wonders if Hannibal ever does normal stuff like that, or if his whole life is just riding from one illegal job to another.

“What kind of errands?” he asks.

“We need you to get properly outfitted.”

Will looks down at his plain black shirt and jeans. “What’s wrong with my clothes?”

“You stand out too much in our group. I didn’t give you enough clothes when I dropped them off, my apologies, but there's a store around him that will cater more towards to ensamble of our gang.”
“Just two friends out on a shopping spree?” Will asks.

Hannibal looks over the rim of his coffee cup and shrugs.

The shop Hannibal has in mind is a little hole-in-the-wall fashion store, set back from the tourist square in town. Inside, there is screaming metal music playing and leather clad patrons already browsing the racks.

Hannibal leads him up a spiral staircase to a quieter browsing section and begins to sort through the racks.

Will doesn’t care about what Hannibal picks out for him, so he wanders around a little and ends up in the lingerie section. He is examining a set of leather buckled harnesses in confusion, wondering if it’s made for a person or a horse when Hannibal finds him.
He drapes a stack of clothes over Will’s arm and sends him into the dressing room with instructions to try on the ones he likes.

There's a huge amount of leather in the selection Hannibal picks out. Will sorts through the shirts, discards one on the grounds that it has a band logo, and another one on account it’s emblazoned with a marijuana leaf. He pulls on a random dark shirt and struggles into some jeans, but doesn’t look at himself in the mirror. He doesn’t know what will be looking back at him.

He peeks out the dressing room curtain and spies Hannibal in the shoe section.

“Pssst.” he calls, and Hannibal sidles over. “Do I look okay?”

He realizes too late that it came out sounding like an invitation for Hannibal to look him over, and he does exactly that, ducking into the dressing room and looking Will steadily up and down. The weight of his regard is almost tangible. Will fights not to close him eyes.

“You look very good.” Hannibal finally answers. “Although I think a black jacket would look better with your skin tone.”

Will turns slightly and is looking Hannibal straight in the face, but he’s not so nervous about meeting eyes anymore.

“What about boots?” Hannibal asks.

Will shakes his head. “Whatever you think would look good on me.”

Hannibal brings back a few pairs of steel toed combat boots, studded ankle creepers, and heavy military-issued ankle boots. Will picks out the sturdiest boots he can lift and finds they have a blade holster beside the ankle. He hasn't changed out of the top and jeans yet, and

when he laces up the boots and stands up he catches Hannibal looking him over with what feels like pride. Without thinking about the implications of it, Will turns his back to him and tilts his head over, exposing his neck as he pretends to fix his collar. Hannibal doesn't move, but Will can see his eyes darken in the mirror.

When Will stands up again Hannibal fixes the seams on his shoulders and smooths the shirt down, keeping his hands on Will as he turns him around to straighten the fabric at his chest. With their faces little more than a foot apart, Will can smell the coffee on Hannibal's breath and cologne on his neck. The smell makes Will's cock jerk just a little as he remembers what he did last night with Hannibal's shirt.

Will is led to a mirror and when he looks himself up and down he is surprised to find he looks bad, but like, in a good way. Like he's not a rabbit anymore, but a rabbit in wolf's clothing. He looks like he could kill a man with the studs on his belt.

"What do you think?" Hannibal asks.

"I look good." Will says, surprise in his voice. "I look like you."

Will can see their reflection in the mirror, with the biker standing behind him like a guard dog. Hannibal smiles.

"You'll certainly fit the gang now. How does it feel?"

"Weird."

Hannibal's smile widens. "I meant the outfit."

"Oh. It's- it's comfortable."

"Excellent. You'll be happy with these clothes then?"

"Yeah."

"They suit you quite well."

Will swallows and tries to smile but grimaces instead. "That's it? We can go now?"

Hannibal looks amused. "Have you found this so very tiresome that you can't wait to escape?"

"Could've been worse, I guess." Will mumbles.

Hannibal leaves him to undress and takes the piles of clothes over his own arm when Will's changed.

At the cash register Hannibal pays for everything. The cashier bags it all up and hands it over to Will as Hannibal watches him with a slight touch of possession.

It makes the back of Will's neck prickle. A strange heat is settles in his stomach, not uncomfortable, but certainly unusual.

Once outside and at their bikes, Will hands over the bags of clothes to Hannibal and kicks his stand up. He notices Hannibal is still smiling, slightly, never all the way to his eyes, but in that special minimalist way of his.

"What are you grinning about?" Will asks.

"Peeking behind the curtain." Hannibal responds. "I was curious to see how you would react to seeing a different side of yourself, merely with a change of clothes."

"You're lucky you're not seeing me get dressed up for formal occasions. That's a side of me nobody should be forced to deal with." Will pauses. "I feel different. I don't know if that's good or not yet."

"Different clothes for a different life." Hannibal replies. Will can't help but smile himself.

"Guess I fit in now." He responds. He revs his bike loud enough to shake the store windows before riding ahead into the road.

Together with the gang, they ride for hours and pull into Iowa City at dusk. Beverly invites Will along with her to a club for drinks, and the rest of the gang joins them. Hannibal uncharastically allows himself to be forced into joining them as well.

At the club, Beverly, Jimmy and Brian throw their drinks back and slide a shot over to Will. He relents and drinks it, and drinks the next couple they send over. He doesn't dance, but encourages Beverly who drags Jimmy out onto the dancefloor with her. Brian laughs at them and orders another round of drinks in celebration. As he tips his glass against Wills, he spots something over Will's shoulder. Will turns around.

Miggs is sitting at the bar, watching Will and Jimmy with a sour look on his face. Will grimaces and looks away.

"Ignore him." He tells Jimmy.

"How? He's fucking staring you down like you killed his father."

"I don't care." Will swallows his drink in one swallow and clinks the glass back down to the table. "I'm not going to let him ruin my evening."

Beverly and Brian return, out of breath from laughing, and they drink their drinks and try and persuade Will to dance. He's in the middle of protesting when a hand clamps down on his shoulder.

"There you are." Miggs grunts at him.

Will looks at Beverly for help but she shrugs, not knowing what to do next. Will stands up so he's eye level with Miggs. The room spins drunkenly beneath his feet but Will remains steady.

"Need something?" he asks.

"C'mere." Miggs pulls him away and Will gestures for Beverly to sit back down.

"I'll be right back." He calls as he is dragged to a quieter corner of the bar.

"I see you've been getting friendly with Lecter." Miggs says when he lets Will go. Will composes himself and stands his ground.

"Not wise." Miggs grabs his drink off a table and tilts the glass up, watching Will over the brim. When he pulls it away there is beer foam on his lip. "You don't make friends in this kind of lifestyle." He wags his finger at Will like a parent admonishing a kid and Will feels a surge of uncharismatic anger jolt through his core. Maybe it's the alcohol in his blood that making his temper rise so fast. "You're sucking up to Lecter in hopes he'll suck you down, am I right?" Miggs laughs and reveals yellow teeth in the gloom. Will feels a twitch along his lip and clenches one fist beneath the table.

"This is the part when you leave." Miggs says. "Leave the bar and the gang. You're tagging along like a parasite and Lecter doesn't want you. Find another bed to warm, lot lizard."

Will doesn't realize he's moving until he feels the weight of the beer mug in his palm. By then the force is already in motion as he tosses Miggs's drink in his face.

Will stops himself from smashing the mug into him too by sheer force of intense willpower. Miggs freezes, blinking stupidly while the beer flows down his face. This time the surge of anger rattling Will's nerves makes him want to break something, to throw the first punch and fight the rage out.

Miggs snarls at him, wiping his eyes, before he stands up. He reaches down to his belt and Will knows in an instant he has a knife hidden there, but the blood racing in his veins tells him to take the knife and finish Miggs first.

"I cut myself." Miggs hisses. Will, caught off-guard, hesitates.

"What-"

"I bit my wrist so I can *die*." Miggs's voice raises above the sound of the music and people turn to look at them.

Kill him, the voice in Will's ear whispers, and Will clenches his jaw and fists, eyeing Miggs's heavy beer glass as a weapon.

Before he can move, Miggs lunges forward and grasps his arm, teeth bared in a yellow grin. It feels like all natural sound has been lifted as Miggs reaches down, under the belt of his jeans. Will reaches for the glass at the same time, so ready to smash it into Miggs's waiting neck-

“See how I bleed?!” Miggs screams, and jerks his hand down and flings his palm at Will. Will feels something hot spattered onto his face and he recoils in horror, looking down in shock. He has been sprayed not with blood, but semen. It drips against his glasses in pearly streaks.

The fighting urge in him curdles and withers as Will stumbles back. Miggs laughs and Will turns tail. Alone in the hallway, he feels a door and lurches through it, turns on a light to find himself in a bathroom.

“Holy shit.” He repeats over and over as he looks into the mirror. There is cum on his cheek and in his hair. He pulls out handfuls of towels and wipes himself off as fast as he can, sobbing out gasps of disbelief. Who the fuck does something like this? What the actual, literal fuck?

He’s more horrified at himself than at Miggs. The power in his hands felt *good* when he was ready to hurt.

Someone knocks on the door. Will doesn’t even look up from where’s he’s trying to rip out the hair stained with Miggs’s cum.

“Fuck off!” He shouts, and the door opens anyways. Will feels hands grab his shoulders and he is turned around to Hannibal’s eye level.

Will shudders hard in his grip and feels pathetic tears in the corner of his eyes. He turns his head away from Hannibal and grips the used towels in his hand.

“I saw what happened, Will, forgive me for not stopping him.” Hannibal says through clenched teeth. He is almost shaking in rage as he runs some paper towels under the faucet and cleans Will up. For an instant his face is open and Will can practically see into Hell itself through his eyes before Hannibal’s composed again.

“I would not have that happen to you. That was unspeakably ugly.”

Will nods in agreement, still in shock, and checks himself over for more cum on his chest. Hannibal wipes up a strand of ejaculate from his neck and Will blanches.

“Discourtesy is inexpressibly horrible to me.” Hannibal says as he cleans the cum from Will’s bangs. “I cannot apologize enough.”

“He’s crazy, you couldn’t have stopped that-” Will shudders again and fights to control himself. He wants to burn every bit of skin off that Miggs’s cum touched. “I just- have to stay away-”

“No, Will.” Hannibal grips his shoulder again and Will can feel the power in Hannibal’s grasp. His rage has not subsided. “There is no way to forgive that man for what he did to you.”

“Stop it. Hannibal-”

“Go back to the hotel, Will.” Will feels the lightest of touches on his forehead and his mind doesn’t catch up to the fact Hannibal has kissed him. “I will take care of things.”

Then he is gone from the bathroom and the ground beneath Will’s feet spins dizzyingly. He can’t tell if it’s alcohol or his own brain bending the walls before him.

“Hannibal!” He calls. He throws away the towels and scrambles out of the bathroom, falling against the wall opposite the door. He spots Hannibal in the crowd grabbing Miggs arm and pulling him from the club. The last thing he sees is the red light in Hannibal’s eyes before Will breaks into a run.

The hallway is dark, the lights muted. Will takes heavy steps muffled on the carpet and breathes silently through his nose. The hairs on the back of his neck prickle and he turns around, feeling watched, but the corridor behind him is empty.

When did he get back to the hotel?

Will looks down at his feet and finds his boots are caked in mud. His hair is windblown. He doesn’t remember leaving the club or arriving at the hotel. Was he roofied?

The carpet swims drunkenly under his feet.

Will's eyes focus on the rooms on either side of him and a door slightly ajar catches his eye. Without really thinking about it, Will cautiously nudges it open with his foot and the finds the room empty at first glance. His eyes adjust to the dark and he can see a shape on the ground at the other end of the room. He draws a quick breath and tenses to slam the door and run- the feeling of danger strengthens into a gust of fear through his gut.

The shape sits up.

“Hello, Will.” It says, and Will’s shoulders sag with relief.

“Hannibal?”

The other man stirs but doesn’t try to get up. “I see you made it back to the hotel on your own.” Hannibal says, sounding amused.

“I don’t know how-” Will runs his shaking hands through his hair and looks up and down the hallway again, still feeling unseen eyes upon him. He walks over to Hannibal and stands before him. His mind is reeling in what feels an awful lot like a fever dream. He’s not quite sure if he’s awake yet. “How I got back-”

Hannibal’s eyes catch the light from the hallway as he looks up. “I’m glad you could make it, Will.”

Will blinks hard a few times and Hannibal’s shape is a little clearer in the gloom. There is blood on his face, bruises blooming on his cheekbones. His hair is completely disheveled. “What...happened?” Will asks.

“Miggs was terribly rude to you, Will.”

Will sinks to his knees in front of Hannibal so he doesn’t have to keep looking down at him. Hannibal meets his gaze steadily from under his bangs.

“Where is he?” Will whispers.

“In the bathroom.” Hannibal whispers back.

Behind the door Hannibal is leaning against, something pounds once on the wood.

Hannibal is quiet, gauging Will’s reaction. He leans his head back against the door and blood trickles from his nose to his mouth.

Will’s focus slits between whatever is behind the door and his concern for Hannibal. The thoughts in his head sit at drunken, fuzzy angles and nothing makes sense- seeking contact, some sort of grounding, he leans forward, reaches out with one hand, and cautiously tucks Hannibal’s bangs back into their hold.

Hannibal is utterly still—more still than Will believed that any human being could be. He doesn’t move; Will can’t tell if he’s breathing.

“I feel like I dragged you into my world.” Hannibal murmurs, eyes fixed on Will. Will withdraws his hand and doesn’t have enough pressure in his lungs to draw air.

“I came here of my own accord.” He replies quietly.

In that moment there is a small crack behind Hannibal’s pupils- an intimate flicker that borders on vulnerability. It is quickly swallowed up by darkness again so fast Will thinks he imagined it. Will notices the knife in Hannibal’s hand when the other man twists it so it catches the light.

There is another pound on the door, this one weaker.

“You must forgive Miggs for his rude tongue.” Hannibal says. The darkness in his face gathers beneath his brows and cheekbones so the only spark of life about him is his breath on his lips. “He won’t be wagging it again.”

Hannibal stands up slowly. Will stands up too, and steps back when Hannibal opens the door to the bathroom.

Miggs is on his stomach on the bathroom floor, his entire front soaked in crimson. The tile floor is slick with his own dark blood. He wheezes loudly and pauses to heave blood onto the tile, his eyes rolled back into his head.

Hannibal steps delicately over Miggs and wipes his knife on Miggs’s jacket. He looks back at Will and nods to a box of tissues on the nightstand. Will retrieves the box and hands a tissue to Hannibal.

Hannibal wipes the blade off with the tissue and replaces it back in his coat before wiping his boot against the fabric of Miggs's jeans. Once he is satisfied it is clean, he leans down before Miggs.

"Thank you very much." He tells him.

Miggs babbles back at him and spits, spattering Hannibal's face with blood. Hannibal recoils, disgusted, and uses his foot to roll Miggs over to his back.

Miggs convulses, writhing like a maggot. He chokes and gurgles horribly, chest heaving. Hannibal watches dispassionately for a second and shuts the bathroom door, effectively cutting off the sound of Miggs's gagging.

He turns back to Will and easily steps into his space. Will shrinks back involuntarily and swallows hard when Hannibal gazes at him warmly. He doesn't move as Hannibal takes a few tissues from the box and cleans Miggs's blood from his face.

"He didn't even have the grace to die easily." Hannibal says. He crumples the tissues in his palm and frowns at the blood under his nails. "May I use your bathroom? Mine is currently...occupied."

Will trails after him numbly, only just remembering to shut the motel door behind him.

The sound of the shower is loud in the quiet of Will's bedroom. Will sits on his bed and counts all the places he can feel his pulse ticking in his veins. His breath is shallow and his hands are clenched in the material of his jeans. He is sitting with his head between his knees so he doesn't throw up. His throat bobs with the effort of keeping bile down.

He's still drunk, drunk enough to not put much thought into tomorrow. There's just his breath on his skin and the roar of the shower a wall apart.

The next instant Hannibal is opening the door to the bedroom and Will is temporarily sidetracked by the time skip- did he fall asleep while Hannibal was showering? He inhales and gets a taste of shampoo and soap on the steam wafting through the room.
Hannibal turns off the bedroom light and flicks on the lamp at the bedside table. The bulb is dim; there are deep shadows in every corner of the room.

Will doesn't look up as Hannibal approaches. As Hannibal steps ever so slightly too close to him. Their legs touch and Hannibal looms like a shadow. He's unapologetically in Will's space and Will feels himself fray with the tension between them. He looks up.

Hannibal is watching him in utter curiosity. He reads Will as their eyes meet and Will drops his head back down so Hannibal can't see the inside of his head.

"Are you upset by what you saw?" Hannibal asks gently.

Will clears his throat. His tongue is thick with alcohol and his voice is honeyed and slurred. "That, and other things. There's...I...There's blood on your hands." He flinches and scrubs his

hands over his face, speaks from under his fingers. “Metaphorically.”

“Miggs was a deeply disturbed man.” Hannibal replies. Will can feel Hannibal’s body heat radiating from where Hannibal’s leg touches his knee. He wants to bury his hands in Hannibal’s shirt the way he would to a towel fresh from the dryer. “I, for one, am pleased with the outcome of this evening. Aren’t you?”

There is a heavy pause.

Will wets his lips and closes his eyes. “Yes.” he whispers. He can almost taste the pride rolling off of Hannibal.

“I’m starting to scare myself.” He has to drag the words from his throat and they are rusty in his mouth. “But, I...I’m glad Miggs is dead.”

He presses his fists into his eyes and takes a heavy breath.

“I’m glad you killed him.”

His voice is unwavering.

The next thing he feels is Hannibal’s hand on his head and the weight is grounding. Comforting. Will leans into his touch and exhales shakily.

“Why do I trust you?” He says under his breath. “Why am I not running? I should be calling the police. I should be terrified. I should have stopped you..I..”

Hannibal tousles Will’s curls and his touch is strong and warm. Will’s voice dies in his throat when Hannibal’s other hand touches his cheek. Hannibal sinks down in front of him and holds his jaw with both hands on either side of his face. Will swallows and sways gently in Hannibal's grip.

“Will.” Hannibal murmurs. His eyes are soft and despite the cuts and bruises on his face he is terrifyingly beautiful.

Will feels Hannibal’s breath on his mouth and he tips his jaw forward to kiss him. Just like that, a brief moment of lips touching and WIll’s stomach flips over so hard he clenches his eyes shut. He slides his mouth against Hannibal’s in a wet slip and pulls back, lips parted. When he opens his eyes he sees Hannibal licking his lips. He flicks his pupils from Will’s eyes to his mouth and closes the space between them again, harder this time.

Hannibal clenches his hands against Will’s face and breaches the seam of Will’s lips with his tongue. Electricity shoots up and down Will’s back at the heat of Hannibal’s mouth against his. He finds his hands on the outside of Hannibal’s thighs and Hannibal’s hands holding his jaw tight in place, pushing him back onto the bed.

Will's breath catches when his shoulders make contact with the mattress. Hannibal doesn’t stop kissing him as he gracefully plants his knees on either side of Will’s hips, leaning over him with the sides of his leather jacket hanging over Will’s torso, sheltering him from the chill of the room.

Will clutches the back of Hannibal’s jacket and has the air kissed from his lungs. When Hannibal gives him a hint of teeth along the pulse of his tongue Will recoils back, remembering Miggs lying on a bathroom floor with an empty mouth. Hannibal recognises this and shows his teeth then, in a sharp drag against Will’s bottom lip. Will’s hips stutter upwards against Hannibal’s solid weight in response.

Hannibal releases his mouth and tips his head to kiss at WIll’s neck. He sucks hard at the tender skin and Will heard himself whimper as his cock fills out beneath Hannibal’s weight.

He's not so drunk that he couldn't say no. The word doesn't even cross his mind. If he were sober, he would hardly have been brave enough to kiss Hannibal, let alone grind into Hannibal's hips and feel Hannibal's cock against him.

Hannibal presses his palm against Will’s neck and squeezes, hard. Will can feel his pulse fluttering against Hannibal’s hand and he can’t swallow, can’t cry out or even breathe and his lips part in desperation as his throat is crushed into his spine-

And Hannibal kisses him for it, a hot press against his numb mouth with a feral smile.

He lets up and Will heaves, gasping for air as his cock strains against the front of his pants. He is flushed and shaking and breathless and for all that he pulls Hannibal down to him and intertwines their tongues, panting into his mouth. His breath hitches as Hannibal palms him through his jeans and unzips his fly.

He turns his face into the hand that tangles into his hair and whines low in the back of his throat. Hannibal licks his palm and takes Will in his hand.

“Hn!” Will jumps at Hannibal’s touch and the muscles in his thighs and abdomen and hips flex when Hannibal strokes him in a smooth pull. He seethes and turns his head away, lip between teeth, ashamed at how good this feels. At how close he is to losing control under Hannibal’s hands. His brows knit together and he jerks his hips in Hannibal’s grip, thrusting up into his fist.

“That’s it.” Hannibal breathes. He keeps Will’s head pressed into the bed with the hand in his hair and his weight on Will’s thighs, holding him down. When Will sobs out he kisses Will hotly under the jaw, licks and sucks there until Will is shaking under him.

It is rough and hot and close and Will arches into Hannibal’s grip, thighs shaking, fists tight in Hannibal’s coat. He knocks his head back into the pillow and shows his teeth as he grits out, “Hannibal-”

Hannibal bites the hot pulse of his jugular and Will comes, hard, with an anguished sob burning in his throat.

He pants hard, mouth open, and Hannibal has the decency to look pleased with himself as he brushes Will’s sweat soaked hair from his forehead.

He reaches to the bedside table for tissues and wipes off his hand, Will spread out on the coverlet next to him with his pants undone as he catches his breath. His mind is empty,

gloriously white hot in the aftershocks of his orgasm.

He turns his head and watches Hannibal twist to throw the tissues into the trash. The light from the lamp highlights the creases of the angle of his body. The bulge of his cock is visible through his jeans in that moment of light. For a second Will is shocked with himself- how could he have aroused Hannibal to this point already?- but Hannibal flicks the light off and rolls over to him.

He fits against Will's back and presses his cock tight into the curve of Will's ass. His breath is humid on the back of Will's neck as he presses his nose in Will's curls. Will swallows hard and is momentarily lost, not sure what to do with his hands as Hannibal puts his palms on Will's thighs.

"Spread your legs," He breathes, and Will shivers and obeys. Hannibal runs his hands up the inside of WIll's thighs and pulls his jeans and underwear down easily. Will jerks when Hannibal unbuckles his own belt.

"Wait." He says, turning his head to catch Hannibal's eyes. "I've never- I don't-"

"Shh." Hannibal's expression is dark, his eyes alight with what might be lust or hunger. "Press your thighs together."

Will shivers as Hannibal pulls his length from his underwear and grinds it against Will's ass for a moment, sliding hot against him.

Hannibal guides his cock so it glides between Will's thighs, up tight against Will's perineum. Will is rocked gently with each thrust and he grinds his hips back, feels his cock stir in interest again when Hannibal's breath catches in pleasure. He mouths at Will's bicep and thrusts harder, mattress squeaking slightly beneath them. Will, mouth open at the sensation of Hannibal's cock ground hard against him, twists his head as far as he can and catches Hannibal's mouth with his. He sucks Hannibal's bottom lip into his mouth and tastes a rush of blood as Hannibal's lip splits and Hannibal grunts low and comes, hips jerking and soaking the inside of Will's thighs.

They pant together, carbon dioxide passing between their mouths as Hannibal pulls back, leaving Will's thighs wet. He cleans himself up with a handful of tissues from the box on the nightstand and cleans Will too. When he's done, he arranges Will on his side so he can spoon him from behind.

He doesn't wrap his arms around him because Will would probably short-circuit, and for that Will is grateful. It's easy to kick his pants and underwear off and slip his hips into the indent in the mattress from Hannibal's body weight to snuggle against him there.

Hannibal makes a low noise at that but breathes slow and even and tucks his face between Will's shoulder blades, eventually lulling Will into a light doze. Some time later Hannibal actually falls asleep and one of his hands wraps around Will's arm, keeping Will against him. It seems like even in sleep the possessive part of him won't let Will go.

Will stays awake, his breathing calm but his heartbeat erratic, and dozes with the image of Miggs drowning in his own blood playing over and over again in the space nightmares usually occupied.

Bleeding Out

Chapter Summary

Bleeding Out by Imagine Dragons

I'm bleeding out
So if the last thing that I do
Is bring you down
I'll bleed out for you
So I bare my skin
And I count my sins
And I close my eyes
And I take it in

Chapter Notes

I changed a few things in chapter six- it might make the story flow better if you go back and reread it :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Morning arrives with the usual cacophony of cars on the highways outside. Will awakens gradually, for once not clawing his way out of a nightmare. He’s tucked up close into himself, legs pulled up and elbows digging into his ribs. Hannibal rests on Will’s pillow, breathing evenly and relaxed. He sleeps with a mildly worried expression, the tension in his face somehow softened by his mussed up hair and bangs brushed across his forehead. Will stares in fascination as Hannibal frowns in his dreams.

They lay on their sides, nose to nose on the same pillow, breathing in each other. Hannibal has his hands on Will’s hips, not quite holding him close enough to call this snuggling.

Hannibal sighs and opens his eyes into narrow slits, his pupils contracting and dilating in turn.

"Good morning.” He murmurs, voice rough.

Will responds with a raspy “Mornin’,” and licks his lips. This is the very first time he’s actually stayed with someone through the night, he realises. The first time he hasn't gathered his clothes up and left before he even caught his breath. It’s a very strange feeling.

Hannibal's eyes are drowsy but the hard walls behind them have already come back up, the softness of his face in sleep replaced by harsher lines in the morning sun.

His shirt clings tightly to his biceps, drawing Will's eyes to the defined muscles there when Hannibal's shoulders flex with the motion of his arms. The tattoos on his arms ripple along the contours of his skin when Hannibal brings his hands up to Will's shoulders.

Will stiffens when Hannibal's palms touch the bare skin of his collarbone and slide up until he's lightly cupping Will's jaw. Hannibal's eyes are half-lidded; the focus in the room narrows as he leans into Will and tilts his head. Will closes his eyes- pulse in his throat hammering hard- but there is no kiss; just Hannibal's breath on his lips and the heat of him held there. He feels the flutter of Hannibal's eyelashes on his cheekbones and his body responds in kind with a tiny tremble. He swallows loudly and waits- lips slightly parted and no other sensation on his skin besides Hannibal's heat holding him close.

"Has sleep eased your troubled mind?" Hannibal breathes.

Will blindly turns his head and their foreheads touch, a spark of proper contact now. Unwilling to open his eyes and lose his bravery, Will tilts his jaw up and catches Hannibal's mouth in a light, dry kiss.

"I-I'm sorry." He murmurs against him. "I was drunk- I don't remember-"

Last night had to have been a dream. All of it- the club and the murder and what followed after. There's no way Will could have been that open with someone else- no way Will could have been jerked off by the man now holding him close-

"Don't remember?" Hannibal whispers back. "Any of it?"

"The sex." Will replies bluntly. He opens his eyes to find Hannibal staring straight back at him. "I remember that."

"Good." Hannibal murmurs. His eyes start to drift shut again and Will watches him slip back into a light doze. His breath evens out and his hands loosen on Will's jaw. WIll watches him for a moment, considering kissing him back awake, but he's not drunk or brave enough to even snuggle closer and go back to sleep. He gets up, slips into a pair of clean boxers, and pads to the bathroom.

He takes a piss and washes his face, considers running the shower to get the smell of sex and sweat off of his body. When he looks in the mirror his eyes catch on the red and purple bruises on his neck. There are three or four, all in the shape of Hannibal's mouth. The mark on his jugular holds imprints of teeth.

He tries to tug his shirt up to cover the marks, but it doesn't cover a single one. He'd have to wear a turtleneck or a scarf. He turns around to catch Hannibal watching him silently from the doorway. His eyes trace over Will's bruises, burning with possession.

"I don't have any concealer." Will blurts, fighting down the blush in his cheeks.

“Neither do I.” Hannibal responds. Is that smugness in his voice?

“You did this on purpose?”

“I am afraid I was a bit...overwhelmed.”

Hannibal’s eyes flicker back up to Will’s face.

“Oh.” Will says. it comes out more softly than he intended. “.....Everyone will see-”

“Exactly.” Hannibal responds. “Everyone will see."

Will meets his gaze and can almost feel Hannibal’s mouth on his neck again. Every part that Hannibal has touched him last night is hypersensitive, as if his hands left burns behind.

He bites his lip, another question posed on his lips, the stirrings of arousal sparking in his gut.

“Right. Okay.” He mutters, dropping it. He turns to the shower and Hannibal leaves him, shutting the bathroom door behind him.

After he’s washed, Will opens the door to the bathroom and spots Hannibal lurking on the other side of the bedroom, fully dressed but hair looking like he was dragged backwards through a hedge. Sex hair, Will thinks, and finds that he likes the way it looks on Hannibal.

“You can-” he says, and Hannibal looks up. “Can come in if you need to.”

He leaves the bathroom door open and finishes buckling his belt as Hannibal enters and brushes his hair, slicks his bangs back.

Will leans casually against the bathroom counter, watching Hannibal. The other man sets down his comb and turns to Will, mirroring his position against the opposite counter.

“What was that last night?” Will asks.

“Do you mean the attack or what happened after?” Hannibal says calmly. A vivid image of Hannibal’s hand on his cock makes heat rise in Will’s cheeks, but he fights down the rush of blood south.

“We knew from the start that Miggs was going to be trouble.” Hannibal says. “He wormed his way into the gang like a parasite and used the cover of our group for his own business. Alana insisted he stay, as his drug dealing bought us territory rights in the East Coast.”

“Why did he go after me?”

“Miggs has attacked other members before. The gang used to be much bigger before he snaked his way in and chased off everyone else. I imaged he felt threatened by you and he decided to chase you out.”

“And last night was different?”

“Last night he went after you.” Hannibal’s eyes burn into him. Will runs a hand through his hair in exasperation, making it even messier.

“You killed a man because he jacked off on me?” Will asks accusingly.

“Because he disgraced you, insulted you, and made you feel unwelcome. Also, he was rude to everyone else and a general waste of upbringing.”

“You can’t just kill people.” Will says, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“My experience suggests otherwise.” Hannibal responds. They stand looking at each other for a moment, Will, more exasperated than upset that he’s trying to talk sense into a murderer, and Hannibal as dispassionate as usual.

What a pair they make.

“I suggest we leave before the maid service makes their rounds.” Hannibal says. “The rendezvous is today and I would hate that we were made late by police investigation.”

“Yeah.” Will sighs. “Yeah, okay. But seriously.” He combs his hand through his wet hair again and rubs nervously over his stubble. “You can’t just murder your way out of bad situations.”

“It’s worked before.” Hannibal says ominously, packing his things.

Over breakfast Hannibal sits across from Will and talks to Bedelia with his outstretched leg bumping against Will’s occasionally beneath the table.

Beverly is suffering through her hangover, grumbling into her coffee and trying to keep down bits of toast Will offers her.

After, when everyone is checking their motorcycles over and running to the gas station for last minute fill ups, Beverly leans over Will’s handlebars and asks how the night went. Will gives her a level stare, but Beverly’s gaze is pulled down toward Will’s throat and the marks there. WIll remembers too late the love bites and moves to pull his shirt up, but Beverly just gives him a full grin and punches him lightly in the shoulder.

“Get some!” she crows, delighted, and runs back to Jimmy and Price to gossip over it.

Minnesota is flat and grey. The highway goes on for miles straight ahead of them and the sky touches the horizon without any hills to block it. It’s opposite of the lush valleys of the East Coast. The little towns they pass through sometimes for gas breaks are small and and gritty with potholes in the road and shoes strung up on telephone wires.

While they ride, Will wonders whatever happened to the Dog Pack Gang. Hannibal made it sound like they were right on their trail in Virginia, but nobody’s mentioned them since.

By time they reach Fargo, North Dakota, Will’s hips are killing him from sitting all day. At the grimy little motel they stop at, the rest of the gang goes to their rooms.

There is an air of dread hanging here, dimming the lights and lengthening the shadows in the stairwells. Will sticks close to Hannibal when they stop at the corner market to pick up sandwiches for dinner. Will keeps his head down; he knows that people wouldn't remember the aloof biker who doesn't look anyone in the eyes. At least he's had practice being standoffish.

Back at the motel, Hannibal is stone-faced and determined. If he's achy or tired, he doesn't show it.

Will finds the rest of the gang, minus Bedelia and Alana, in the hotel lobby, conversing quietly. Everyone's on edge, unable to relax. Beverly paces up and down the lobby floor, fingering the strap of the knife Will knows is hidden in her belt. When prompted, she fills in Will about everyone's role in the meet up later tonight. While it's Hannibal's job to do the dirty work, everyone (except Will, apparently) goes with him to the rendezvous point- a predetermined meet up point outside the town- to find out information about the local cops. Hannibal will ride out before dawn and finish the job, ride back to the meetup point, and receive the commission money. Everyone else will make petty mayhem in the town, distracting the cops from the job going down somewhere else.

"After that," she says, "The group usually stays together for a bit, spending our cut of the money in the area around here, before we split back up into our original gangs and wait until Lecter calls us together for another commission."

Later, near midnight, the rest of the gang start to get suited up for the rendezvous. Will doesn't feel much like hanging around in the lobby, worrying, so he inquires at the front desk for his room key. He wants to ask if he's the only person in the room, or if someone else has checked in before him, but the bell boy doesn't speak enough English to understand and Will doesn't speak enough Spanish to translate.

When he opens the door, Hannibal is sitting on one of the beds, lacing up one of his boots. Will hides his surprise and silently joins him, watching as Hannibal cleans his knives and lays them out in a neat row on the bedspread. He has more blades than Will thinks he can fit on his body, but one by one they disappear into folds of his clothes and belt.

"I'll be back tomorrow evening," Hannibal says, running a finger over the band-aid on Will's palm. "If I don't come back, I want you to get back on your bike and go back to Virginia."

"Why?" Will asks. He takes no comfort in the pained tension in Hannibal's shoulders. The sweep of Hannibal's touch on his palm doesn't calm him down either.

"If I'm not here, then I'm dead." Hannibal is matter of fact about it.

"I thought it was just one guy you had to scare." Will says.

Hannibal runs his hand up Will's arm to the bend in his elbow and presses his thumb absently into the pulse point there."Indeed." he says, then, like an afterthought, "There are always surprises."

Will’s bicep flexes along with the tightening in his jaw, and Hannibal makes a noncommittal noise when he feels Will’s tension under his thumb.

“How quickly you worry about a stranger.” He murmurs. Will can’t meet his eyes.

"You’re not a stranger." He says before he can think. "I’ve never- I don't usually make friends but- this-" he waves a hand to indicate whatever 'this' is between them - "This is something important to me. You can’t leave me now to find my way back to who I was."

Hannibal doesn't have an answer for that. At the stroke of twelve he stands up and kisses Will on the mouth. When he pulls away, Will meets his eyes and looks down again.

“Don’t get caught. You’d better not get fucking caught by the police, after all this.”

Dry as a desert, Hannibal responds, “I could murder my way free if they do.”

Will snorts, surprised, and Hannibal smiles at him.

He shuts the door quietly on his way out and Will listens as the motorbikes roar to life outside. Once the engines have roared away, he locks the door and sits on the bed. He prepares himself for the long wait ahead.

All he can do is hope that everything goes smoothly with the cartel, because he doesn't know what he'll do if Hannibal doesn’t return. He paces the motel room for the remainder of the night, memorizes the layout of the carpet pattern.

Sometime around daybreak he needs to get some air, so he crosses the street again and wanders around the grocery store, purchases something with caffeine and sits out on the curb. It’s a beautiful morning.

Off in the distance, motorcycles roar. His heart momentarily lifts, thinking Hannibal’s returned already, but when the bikes get closer he realises he doesn’t recognize the engine sound.

Huge motorcycles come streaking down the road, shattering the quiet of the day. Not one of them is familiar. None of the bikers look over at Will as they barrage past, but Will stands up anyways and drops his cup of coffee when he sees their coats.

Dog Pack patches flash by him, the foaming hound head insignia standing out against the leather coats.

Will stands looking after them long after they’ve left, his drink splattered down his shoes and forgotten. He feels sick. Something is wrong.

He waits, and waits some more. At some point he goes back to the motel and finds Beverly, discharged from the mayhem-making jobs, and describes the biker gang he saw. Beverly looks worried.

“They’re not supposed to be here.” she says. “I thought we got them off our trail after Tennessee. Maybe someone saw us? Recognised us?”

Will thinks back. “I don’t think we made much contact with anyone besides the hotel clerks and waitresses-” It comes to him in a blinding flash. “The hooker!”

Beverly looks at him with an eyebrow raised. “There a story behind that?”

“At that truck stop in Tennessee, I was approached by a sex worker- she recognised us and passed our whereabouts on to the gangs in the area, and that’s how the Dog Pack was able to follow us.”

Beverly sits back. “Shit.” she sighs, looking out into the road. “I hope Lecter will be okay out there.”

Will leans his arms on his knees, head hanging down.

Beverly gives him a sympathetic look. “Hey, um, listen,”

Will cranes his neck to look at her.

“If, uh, if Lecter doesn’t return...You can always come with my gang.” Beverly scratches the back of her head awkwardly. “Bedelia told me how you left your home to join us and all, so I guess you might not have something to go back to. I’m just letting you know you’ve got a home with us, if you ever need one.”

Will is touched. “Thank you.” he awkwardly, and Beverly smiles warmly at him.

They spend the day together, watching crap TV in Beverly’s room until evening.

Finally, Will lays back on Beverly’s bed and pretends to yawn. “I’m fading off him,” he says, “I think i’m going to head back to my room.”

“You sure you can be alone right now?” Beverly asks. “You kinda look like you’re thinking of doing something crazy.”

“Why?”
“Your eyes,” Beverly gestures at him. “They’re almost...feverish, y’know? You should stay the night here. We’ll have makeovers or something.”

“No, really, I’m good.” Will makes an effort to appear calm. “I’ve got to get to sleep.”

He lets himself out and rests his head against Beverly’s closed door, weighing his options.

Back in his own room, he turns on the light and lays on his bed, not sleeping, but planning. He rifles through Hannibal’s duffel bag and discovers a bottle of whiskey, is sorely tempted but needs his head to be clear.

Searching deeper, he finds Hannibal’s medical satchel and clutches it to himself. It's big enough to cross his arms over protectively. It's pathetic, he tells himself. There's no use

worrying himself into the ground. Either Hannibal is alive, or he is not. And if he is not, is the life of a murderer he barely knows worth mourning?

It feels like days, not hours, before the moon rises. He waits, and waits, and when the clock strikes midnight once again he's up and moving.

He loads his gun, holsters it in his belt and throws his coat on over it. He tucks his knife into the holder in his boot and finds another knife that Hannibal had forgotten in his bag; it's the same fucking Liston knife that got him into this whole mess. He slides it up his sleeve.

The roads are dark and foreboding as he rides away from the motel.

Will stops by the rendezvous point, at a burnt out gas station in the middle of the desert. A couple of unfriendly faces meets him out front when he roars to a halt under the overhang.

"Where's Hannibal Lecter?" Will says.

He parks a block away from the destination and walks through the moonless night. All the streetlamps here are shot out, broken glass crinkling underfoot. There's no other sound in the darkness besides his footsteps.

Will knows that he's not a fighter- he just happens to be a killer out of necessity and accident. He's no match for whatever's waiting for him, but god damn it, he has to try.

He also knows that a handgun and a knife are not going to do much if there are a dozen enemies waiting for him. If he's going to do this, he's going to have to be smart about it. It's possible that things have all gone to plan, and that Hannibal is just taking his time.

He circles around the house, quietly and finds a basement window the size of a housecat. Will squats close and listens in.

He can hear a man and woman arguing with one another. The shouting escalates and one of them stomps upstairs. Will peers through the window and can see a teenage girl pacing the basement floor, looking upset.

Will doesn't know what he was expecting- a squatter's den, maybe, not a fucking family living here. There's no sign Hannibal anywhere.

There is a step behind him and Will whirls around, gun in hand.

"Don't shoot," The person calls out. Will almost drops his gun. He knows that voice.

"Hannibal?" he calls back, disbelieving. The figure comes into the scant light and there is no mistaking the powerful build in those shoulders.

"I told you to stay at the motel." Hannibal says.

"I thought something went wrong." Will says. "The Dog Pack followed us from Virginia-"

Hannibal leads Will back to the basement window. “I know. They were waiting for me. I think they were hoping to kidnap me and get information on the rest of the gang.”

“Where are they?”

Hannibal presses his mouth into a thin line. “The ones guarding the perimeter have been dealt with.”

Will doesn’t press him. “Do you have a plan?”

“Now I do.”

They approach the front door, hidden in the bushes along the side of the path. Will has a moment to breathe and wakes the dark thing that’s been sleeping in his chest and feels it stir to life.

Following Hannibal’s instructions, Will throws a stone at one of the parked cars out front, shatters a window and sets the car alarm off. He has a moment to see Hannibal smile in the darkness.

One of the guards on the front porch steps down to investigate, and Hannibal waits until he’s far enough from the house to grab him and wrestle him into the bushes before he has a chance to make a sound. He smashes his head once to the sidewalk, leaves the comatose form on the ground and gestures to Will to follow him. On the porch, the other guard is on edge, knowing something is wrong.

“Junaz?” He calls. The car alarm is still going off, flashing headlights painting the front of the house in staccato burst of light. The man sees Will and Hannibal’s shadows on the front walk and turns into the house, shouting an alarm.

“Shit!” Will curses, and they run into the house. The front door is unlocked and they throw it aside and pound into the front hall. Will has his gun in his hands and holds it steady as they turn into the kitchen.

The room is empty.

A door to their right opens and before they have a chance to shoot, the woman from earlier in the basement is shoved out and crumples to the tile floor, door slamming behind her. Hannibal runs ahead, examines the woman, and wrenches open the door to race down the basement steps.

Will runs after him, but stops when he sees the woman. Bleeding and wheezing, her white skin is sharp contrast to the crimson blood pooling out of it. She’s been stabbed through her neck, wound gaping open over her neckline. She grasps haltingly for Will, streaking him with her blood. Her cold hand clutches Will’s wrist as her body spasms. She’s already gone, eyes rolled back and blood bubbling over her lips onto the floor. Will pries her slick, red hands from his wrist, trying not to see the last flickers of pain and fear leaving her face.

From behind him there is the pounding of someone running down the stairs, and Will turns to see a Dog Pack member level his gun at him. Without thinking, Will rises and fires, knocking the gun out of the biker's hand with a shot to the shoulder. He runs across the kitchen, feet slipping a little on the blood pooled from the woman, and grabs the gun the biker dropped. He clicks the safety on and shoves it in his belt, aiming his gun at the biker as he lies on the floor, clutching his shoulder. Will backs up, hits the wall, and follows it to the basement door.

He gropes behind himself for the basement door handle, leaving bloody hand prints on the wall, finds the knob, turns it, and steps through. He works his way down the wooden stairs, leaving bloody footprints behind him, and rounds the corner, gun first. Adrenaline allows him to ignore the splatters of blood defacing the walls and floors.

"Hannibal?" he shouts, and stops cold at the sight before him.

The man from before, who was arguing with his wife in the basement, stands with his back to Will in the middle of the basement. He's clutching the teenage girl to himself, knife against her throat. The wild-eyed girl has her weight against the man, chin tucked down, yelling for her father to stop, please. Her father yells at her to shut up. Across the room Hannibal has his gun fixed on him, unable to shoot because of the girl. He looks up at WIll and the man with the knife turns around.

Will raises his gun, but hesitates, because of the girl, and in that second the man panics and pulls the blade across his daughter's throat. The knife parts the skin of the teenager's neck into an erupting spray of blood. Time slows to a crawl and all sound yields to a rush in Will's ears.

Will pulls his trigger, blam-blam-blam, firing into the man's exposed chest over and over. He doesn't go down, keeps slashing, and Will keeps shooting.

With one last deep cut, the man finally falls. Will has a heartbeat to see Hannibal in the corner of his vision firing his gun over WIll's shoulder and a man tumbles down the stairs behind him- it's the man he shot in the shoulder upstairs, now dead on the concrete.

Will scrambles to the girl, tripping over the body on the stairs and his own numb legs, his hands shaking too hard to do anything useful. The girl turns her head as far as she can and wheezes out of her slashed windpipe, entire body shaking with the effort of drawing air.

He drops to his knees and drags her into his lap. He fixes his hand around the terrible wound in her neck, scrambling for a hold on her slick skin. Hot blood courses over his palm, gushing through the spaces between his fingers. He might as well be trying to plug a dam with his pinky for all the good he's doing. He looks up to see her father slumped against the wall before him, chest riddled with bullet slugs.

The man opens his mouth to say something to Will, but instead of words a surge of blood dribbles onto his chest from his mouth and he wheezes into silence.

Will's eyes are starting to glaze over. His hands aren't responding to his directions and his numb fingers relax their hold on the girl's neck. Will watches the blood pump rhythmically into his lap in pulses. There's nothing he can do.

Hannibal is there, swiftly setting aside his gun and pulling the girl from Will. He addresses her wounds and secures a firm hold on her neck with his own hand. Will doesn't look away.

From upstairs comes a gunshot. Will can hear running footsteps, a woman's cry of horror upon discovering the body by the basement door. Alana gallops halfway down the basement stairs and freezes when she sees the carnage.

Will can't work his mouth, can't figure out how to tell her to call 911. Hannibal looks up and nods to her, and Alana gets the hint, pulling out her cell and racing back upstairs again.

Hannibal directs Will without words to press a shirt against the girl's neck and he holds the slit closed, entire body shaking, the splattered blood on his face feeling hot. His hands tremble too hard to do any good and the girl begins to convulse, blood on her teeth. Will looks up to Hannibal, and the other man looks back at him with pupils blown wide in desire, even as he presses his hands over Will's to hold the swath down harder over the wound.

"See?" He whispers, breathless, but Will doesn't.

Chapter End Notes

After four months of being stuck on this chapter- it's finally done! Thank you for your patience!!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!